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No. 387.

{ COMPLETE. }

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 & 36 NORTH MOORE STREET, N. Y.
NEW YORK, April 26, 1890.

ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY.

{ PRICE
10 CENTS. }

Vol. 1.

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OR,
OLD KING BRADY AND THE CAR OF GOLD.

By A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.



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THE JAMES BOYS IN BOSTON:

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OLD KING BRADY AND THE CAR OF GOLD.

By A NEW YORK DETECTIVE,

Author of "A Piece of Blotting Paper; or, Old King Brady in Philadelphia," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

1,000 POUNDS OF GOLD.

"Hey, Charlie! Charlie Terrill, hello!"

Charlie Terrill, hearing some one call, very naturally stopped on his way up the hill and looked around.

It was old Dan Woodson, the laziest man in Leadville, who had spoken, and he now came hurrying up to where the young man stood, puffing and blowing like a grampus, for it is all up and down hill in Leadville, and when one is elevated seven or eight thousand feet in the air it is pretty hard breathing even on the level, especially when one is as fat as Dan Woodson was.

"What is it, Dan?" asked the young man, as soon as his acquaintance had found his breath.

"Mr. Strang wants to see you up at the Golden Nugget right away, Charlie. He told me if I seen you on the street to send you round."

"Wants to see me, Dan? What for?"

"How should I know?"

"Didn't he tell you?"

"Divil a word. He just said if I seen you to send you round."

"Well, I'll go after I get my dinner," replied Charlie coolly. "Mr. Strang don't owe me anything, so it can't be very important."

"I think ef I wuz you I'd go right away," replied Dan meditatively. "Mr. Strang looked to me like a man who had something pretty important on his mind."

"Is that so?"

"Sure as shootin'."

"If that's the case, perhaps I'd better go now," replied Charlie, and he abandoned his intention of going to dinner, and hurried through the main street to the outskirts of Leadville, entering at last the little wooden building which

serves as an office for the Golden Nugget mine, one of the richest of the mines around Leadville, and one of the very few whose yield is largely gold.

Now Charlie Terrill was well acquainted with Mr. Strang.

And why should he not be? For more than three years he had served that gentleman with newspapers at his little stand in the D. & R. G. depot, and as the superintendent of the Golden Nugget was a man who always paid cash, Charlie was at something of a loss to know what he could want to see him for.

His curiosity was not destined to remain long ungratified, however, for he had no sooner entered the office than he found himself in the presence of Mr. Strang, who was nervously pacing up and down the floor.

"Hello, Charlie!" exclaimed the superintendent, in that off-hand way which everybody affects in Colorado. "I'm so glad you've come. I sent down to the depot for you half an hour ago, but you weren't to be found anywhere. That stupid boy you keep at the stand hadn't the least idea where you had gone."

"I was out collecting bills, Mr. Strang. Everybody don't pay like you do."

"No. I dare say not. Well, you're here at last, and in time. I suppose the boy told you I wanted to see you?"

"No, sir. It was Dan Woodson."

"It's all one. Just step inside the hall here. I've something to say."

Charlie obeyed wonderingly.

He was no sooner inside than Mr. Strang stepped out, locked the door, and pulled down the shades, precautions which made Charlie more curious still.

"Sit down," he said.

Charlie took a chair in the middle of the room and Mr. Strang seated himself opposite.

"Do you smoke?" asked the superintendent, passing a box of cigars.

"No, sir."

"Will you have a drop of fine old rye whisky with me? I have some that's splendid in the other room."

"I never tasted whisky in my life, Mr. Strang," replied Charlie, his frank, open countenance reddening slightly. "I'm sorry to offend you, sir, but I'll have to say no to that."

Mr. Strang smiled peculiarly.

"Far from offending me, my boy," he said, "if you had accepted my invitation I should have given you the drink and bid you good-day. I only asked to try you. I want a young man just now who does not drink."

"I never drink, Mr. Strang."

"I am glad to hear you say so. I made up my mind you didn't, but it's always best to be sure. Now, look here, Charlie, how much does your news-stand pay you a week?"

"Oh, ten or twelve dollars, sir, but then there are the beats who don't pay me to come out of that."

"And a good many of them, I suppose?"

"Quite a good many, sir."

"So, altogether, you don't make much over five hundred a year out of the business?"

"About that, sir."

"Now look here, Charlie," said Mr. Strang, leaning forward and speaking with great earnestness. "I will put you in the way of making as much as five hundred dollars in a couple of weeks if you can get any one to take care of your business meanwhile."

"What is it, sir?"

"First tell me if you could arrange it so that I could have three or four weeks of your time?"

"I think that could be arranged. I know a young man who would take charge of the stand who would be pretty straight, I guess."

"You can leave it to me to look after him. I'll make it my business to see that you ain't robbed, and if you are robbed through my negligence I'll make up the amount."

"I wish you'd tell me what you're driving at, Mr. Strang," said Charlie, fairly dying of curiosity.

"I'll tell you now," answered the Superintendent of the Golden Nugget, lowering his voice and looking warily around him. "I have got a very difficult and dangerous undertaking for you to perform. I—just hold on one moment. I want to make absolutely certain that we are alone."

He arose and examined the doors and windows again, coming, in course of his rounds, to an inner door which seemed to communicate with a closet.

"Here's one door that's locked and ought not to be," he said. "I seem to have lost my key to it, but I guess it's all right, though; it's nothing but the closet where I keep my essaying chemicals. Charlie, we are alone, and now I'm going to tell you right out flat-footed what I want. I want an honest man to go East for me and carry with him a thousand pounds of gold."

"Carry a thousand pounds of gold? Why that's a pretty big load for one man."

"Bless your soul, boy, I don't want you to carry it in your pocket nor on your back. It's loaded in a freight car at this present moment down at the depot under Shed A."

"Oh! And where is this gold to go to?"

"It goes to Boston, but its final destination is to be kept a secret even from you. The fact is, Charlie, I've struck a new vein and an enormously rich one. If the stockholders of the mine knew it they would go crazy. The thing has got to be kept secret for the present, and—"

"And give you and a few others a chance to buy up the stock at a low figure, I suppose," said Charlie.

"Well, yes. That's about the size of it."

"And you want an honest man to help you carry out a dishonest scheme?" muttered Charlie, half aloud.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Mr. Strang, looking a little angry.

"Oh, it's none of my business. I was only thinking."

"Keep your thoughts to yourself, young man. It is most decidedly none of your business. All I want of you is to go to Boston in that car and look after the thousand pounds of gold."

"And you'll give me five hundred dollars for the job?"

"Yes."

"I'll take the offer."

"I was sure of it. I had another man engaged, but at the last moment he went on a drunk, and I found I could not trust him. Then I thought of you."

"When do you want me to go, Mr. Strang?"

"To-night. They will begin making up the train at eleven, and it will start shortly after midnight. Of course you cannot go alone. One of the mine hands will accompany you, a stout, honest fellow named Cleary. He will have nothing to say, and will be instructed to mind you in everything. Can you make your arrangements to start so soon?"

"Oh, yes. But what is to be done with the gold when I get to Boston?"

"I shall send a telegram in time to meet you at South Pueblo. It is not yet decided just what we shall do with it. There are some points to be settled which cannot be settled until after the

train leaves Leadville. To be plain with you, there are certain interested parties here who are opposed to the gold being sent East at all."

"Well, sir, I'll do my best."

"I'm sure of it. Now be off and make your arrangements as quick as possible. I'm through here, and we'll walk down-town together. Just wait till I get my coat and— What's that?"

"What?" questioned Charlie.

"I thought I heard a noise, as if some one was outside the window."

"I heard nothing."

"But I did. Keep perfectly still; we'll soon see."

Mr. Strang walked toward the outer door and softly turned the key, throwing the door open suddenly and peering out.

There was no one to be seen outside, however.

It was now dark, and the stars were shining brilliantly upon the snow.

Mr. Strang walked entirely around the little building, upon his return reporting no one there.

"It's a terrible responsibility," he said, "and I wish I was well through with it. I haven't had a decent night's sleep in weeks, and I don't expect one until I hear that the gold has reached its destination safely. However, you have taken a big load off my mind, Charlie Terrill, for I know I can trust you. But you haven't a moment to lose. Come on."

He locked the door, and they left the office together.

For several minutes all remained silent inside the office. The clock ticked loudly, the dying coals in the little stove shone with a ruddy glow.

Presently a light tapping might have been heard on the window.

Might, did we say?

It was heard.

Scarcely was the signal given than the closet door, to which Mr. Strang had lost the key, opened, and out walked a tall, heavily bearded man, wearing the rough dress of a Western cowboy or miner.

He glanced narrowly about the room, his hand holding a cocked revolver, and, seeing no one, walked straight to the other door, and drawing a key from his pocket proceeded to insert it in the lock.

The door flew open, but the man did not step across the threshold. Instead he gave a low whistle and drew back.

Instantly a second man appeared and passed into the office.

He likewise was tall and had a long, sallow, solemn face.

His dress was similar to that of his companion, perhaps even a shade more pronounced.

"That you, Jess?" he whispered.

"You bet, Frank. Come in. I want to shut the door."

"Ain't you afraid of the watchman?"

"Not much. He's chock full. I attended to that. Only thing I'm afraid of is that the super will come back again. We want to settle this business and light out just as soon as we can."

"Did he tumblo, Jesse?"

"Not once. Thinks he lost his key."

"And you heard all?"

"Every blame word."

"When does the gold start?"

"To-night at twelve o'clock."

"What's your plan?"

"Same as it was at first, to strike the train just east of Pueblo. I've never altered my mind since Clel Miller's brother first put us on to the racket. Lucky thing for us that he came out here to work in the Golden Nugget. I tell you what it is, Frank, if we succeed in getting this thing through, we'll have to give the gang the shake. They are enjoying themselves at

Pueblo in the fond expectation that we're going to divide with them, but I'll see 'em blamed fast. You an' I'll whack up and light out; let them go to thunder. We'll have enough to live on the balance of our lives."

These were noble sentiments, certainly.

So much for that boasted sentiment, "honor among thieves."

"That's all very well to talk about," responded Frank in his usual grumbling fashion, "but I for one don't care to have my throat cut. Fancy Clel Miller, or Jim Cummings hearing you!"

"No one hears us, brother—we are alone."

"Oh, bother, don't let's waste any more time chinning. What's to be did?"

"Nothing, except to take the train for Pueblo at nine o'clock, and get the boys sobered up and ready for biz."

"You overdid the matter when you got that fellow full, Jess."

"I own up I did. The cuss he's engaged now is a regular little saint, and there won't be nothin' for it but to kill him. You'd jist orter heard him talk as I did. One thing's sure though, he must make the start alone."

"You haven't seen Cleary this evening?"

"No."

"Well, go for him now then. Git him biin'. We don't want any more bother than necessary."

"Oh, leave that to me; I'll fix him," replied Jesse.

He opened the door of the office and they stepped out.

"Guess old What-you-may-call-him will find his pay roll over next week," sneered Jess. "I know one feller who won't show up for his wages, and that's me."

Following the direction taken by Mr. Strang and Charlie, the brothers, who were none other than the James Boys, the noted Missouri outlaws, hurried off over the frozen snow.

CHAPTER II.

CHARLIE MAKES A START.

It was after eleven o'clock that night when Charlie Terrill, the popular newsman of Leadville, passed along the line of the east-bound freight train then making up to begin its long journey to the sea.

"I hope you will manage to be comfortable, Charlie," said Mr. Strang. "I've had a nice little stove put in the car, and there are plenty of provisions. The fifty dollars I gave you will more than cover any extra expenses both for yourself and Cleary. Of course you'll wire me from time to time, and keep me informed how things go on."

"Certainly, sir. Is this the car?"

"It is," replied Mr. Strang, pausing before a freight car somewhere about the middle of the train close to which a number of the Leadville police force was standing. This is your home for the next two weeks, Charlie."

"Will it take as long as that?"

"Probably. It is impossible to say just how fast they'll push it through. Once you pass the Missouri border though, there will be nothing to fear. What worries me most is the James Boys' gang. If they should in any way happen to get wind of this gold you may have trouble, but of course that won't happen till you near Missouri. You might engage a couple of detectives at Kansas City to go through with you to Alton. Missouri is a hard State."

"Upon my word I'd just as soon take my chances with the James Boys as with the detectives," exclaimed Charlie, as they leaped in to the car.

Things were snug in the car—there was no mistake about that.

There was the little stove, with its pipe run-

ning out through the roof; there was a wire cot nailed to the floor in one corner and another in the other. In a third corner were several square, inoffensive looking boxes piled up, one on top of the other. There were five of those boxes altogether, and Mr. Strang informed Charlie that they contained the gold.

"Where's Cleary?" asked the superintendent of a second policeman, who sat near the fire in a comfortable camp-chair.

"He hasn't come yet, sir."

"And he was to be here by nine o'clock. I don't like that. Officer, I wish you'd go up-town and see if you can find him."

The request was complied with, but it brought no Cleary. Even the policeman failed to return.

Twelve o'clock came, and the conductor of the freight train, a man named Storms, approached the car and announced that they were about to start.

Mr. Strang was wild.

"What in the name of sense shall I do?" he said, excitedly. "Mr. Storms, you'll have to back up the train and run this car on a side track. It can't start with this young man alone."

"Can't be done, Mr. Strang," replied the conductor, decidedly.

"But it must."

"But it can't."

"There's two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in this car, Mr. Storms, and the owners of the Golden Nugget look to me for its safety."

"I can't help it if there's two hundred and fifty million, sir. I've got my orders to start this train in ten minutes and in ten minutes she starts—see?"

They were all standing on the ground beside the car at this time, and the conductor closed his watch with a snap and turned to walk away.

"Hold on, Storms. I'll give you a hundred dollars if you'll hold back this train long enough for me to go up to the mine and get one of my workmen out of the boarding-house," said Mr. Strang, whose mind was evidently very much disturbed.

"Couldn't possibly do it, Mr. Strang. I wouldn't accept a bribe under any circumstances."

"Oh, I didn't intend——"

"Yes, you did. I've had people try to bribe me before. I know what it means. I'll tell you what I'll do, though. I've got a card marked 'Dynamite! Be careful!' in the caboose. I'll tack it on the car for you. That'll make everyone afraid of it. You can wire your friends in Pueblo to have a man ready. Guess this young feller and me can take care of them gold bars on the run down the slope."

"How do you feel about it, Charlie? Are you afraid to start out alone?" inquired Mr. Strang.

"Oh, no, sir. I wouldn't be afraid to go all the way alone. You've made a perfect walking arsenal out of me, with the two revolvers, the rifle and bowie knives you insisted upon my taking. If any one tries to bulldoze me I'm ready for them, that's all."

"Let him go, Strang," said the conductor. "I've known Charlie Terrill a good while. I'll bet on him every time."

"Then go, and may good luck go with you," said Mr. Strang. "I'll see that a responsible man joins you at South Pueblo."

He shook hands with Charlie when the train started, some ten minutes later, and stood watching the endless line of cars as they went rumbling out of the freight-yard.

"I don't know what the reason is," he muttered as he turned away, "but somehow or other I feel as though I was never going to hear of the safe arrival of that gold in Boston. These sleepless nights have pulled me down terribly. I'll just step up to the telegraph office, and wire my

lawyer in South Pueblo, to meet Charlie with the final instructions, and a good man for an assistant, and then I'll turn a good stiff horn of whisky into me and turn myself into bed."

With these laudable intentions, Mr. Strang struck up the hill toward the telegraph office. He did not encounter either the man Cleary, or the police officer who had been sent to find him, but when he reached the telegraph office, he ran right into the sheriff of Leadville, who seemed to be in a highly excited frame of mind.

"Great Scott! Is that you, Mr. Strang?" he cried. "Here, I'm wild to get a dispatch off and can't. There's been a snow slide down to Big Canyon and the wires are all down."

Mr. Strang turned pale.

"You don't mean to tell me I can't get a dispatch through at once?" he gasped.

"I mean just exactly that."

"Then I'm dished."

"How so?"

"Why, I don't mind telling you, sheriff. 'I just started a quarter of a million in gold bars east on the midnight freight. To secure their safety it is necessary for me to wire South Pueblo.'"

"Well, you won't be able to do it, then, and I've got something to tell you that'll make you hop."

"For Heaven's sake, what do you mean, man?"

"James Boys!"

"James boys—what James boys? What are you talking about?" demanded Mr. Strang, turning deathly pale.

"I'm talking about the James Boys, the notorious Missonri outlaws. They were seen in town to-night, coming down from the direction of your mine."

"Great God! don't tell me so!"

"It's true. They left for the East on the nine o'clock train. That's what I'm here for. There's a big reward up for Jesse. I wanted to wire a friend of mine to scoop him in, but this snow slide has given me the bluff."

"Sheriff," said Mr. Strang, slowly, "can you describe Jesse James to me?"

"That's easy did. Here's his picture, Mr. Strang."

He pulled a pocketbook out as he spoke, and drew from it a photograph of a tall, coarse-looking man, with piercing eyes and a long black beard.

"Great Caesar's ghost!" cried Mr. Strang, the instant his eyes rested upon it. "Do you mean to tell me that is a picture of Jesse James?"

"You bet. I got it straight from Sheriff Timberlake over in Missouri."

"Why that man has been working in the Golden Nugget for the last two weeks."

"You don't mean it!"

"I do. Sheriff, there's something wrong here."

"About what?"

"Ain't it strange that this man should suddenly leave town on the very night I ship my gold bars?"

"It don't look very nice, Mr. Strang."

"I must start for Pueblo at once," said the superintendent, excitedly. "I must have a special train and overtake that freight. I can't—oh, God! What's the matter with my heart!"

He staggered forward as he thus exclaimed and fell heavily against the sheriff.

"What's the matter, Mr. Strang? Here—help, some one! This man is dying!"

The cry of the sheriff was loud enough to be heard all over the office—even out in the street.

The night operator leaped over the counter. Two gentlemen who were standing just outside the door rushed in and lent their assistance.

It amounted to nothing, however.

When they laid Mr. Strang on the floor of the telegraph office he had ceased to breathe.

"Heart disease," said the doctor, when he arrived at the scene.

Next day the coroner confirmed the statement.

Meanwhile, as no one knew all the details of Mr. Strang's business, the midnight freight continued to roll down the eastern slope of the Rockies with not even a telegram to warn Charlie Terrill of the danger which threatened the thousand pounds of gold.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE PLAINS.

SLOWER and slower moved the wheels of the freight train until at length they ceased to turn.

Charlie Terrill, who had been sitting beside the little stove in his car, trying vainly to keep warm, arose, and, pulling open the door, endeavored to look out.

A wild scene met his gaze, and he would have been glad to shut the door instantly, but this proved no easy matter. The door stuck, and for a moment resisted all his efforts to pull it back into place.

Out on the boundless plains of Eastern Colorado a furious blizzard was raging.

The wind, blowing at the rate of at least a hundred miles an hour, went sweeping past the open door, whirling the snow flakes in a perfect sheet of white, through which it was quite impossible for the eye to penetrate. If Charlie had strained his optics till they dropped out of their sockets he could have distinguished nothing, but one unbroken covering of snow.

"Must be Bear Creek," he muttered as he tugged at the door. "But I don't care what place it is, if I was to get out it's ten to one I'd never get back alive. Thought I'd seen some snow storms up to Leadville, but this takes the cake—yes, the whole bakery. Confound that door, it won't shut, and the snow's drifting in here by the ton. What in the name of sense am I going to do?"

There was no one to help him. Charlie Terrill was quite alone in the car, and as the car happened to be somewhere in the middle of a train of a hundred more just like it, the chance of getting assistance appeared rather slim.

Charlie was puzzled.

Not as to how he was going to get the door shut altogether, but about many other things.

He had left South Pueblo the day before and was still alone.

More than this the promised telegram from Mr. Strang had not been forthcoming.

During the stop at Pueblo Charlie hurried to the telegraph office and then to the hotel, but there was no word for him at either place.

What was he to do?

No one met him according to promise. There were no instructions. How was he to act?

"Better run through to Kansas City," advised Mr. Storms, the conductor. "I'll see Strang when I get back to Leadville, and he can wire you there."

But Charlie was doubtful.

He would have had the car slide-tracked, but the conductor who now took Mr. Storms' place would not hear to it.

His way bill stated that the car was to be pushed through to Boston with all possible speed, and through it had got to go.

Of course Charlie stuck by the car. He could do nothing else.

"I don't see but what you can take care of it well enough," said Mr. Storms. "That dynamite label will be enough to blinder any one from meddling with you. I don't see that you need be afraid."

Charlie was not afraid for himself, but he was afraid for the gold.

Who did it belong to?

What should he do with it when he reached Boston?

The way bill referred to him for instructions, and he had none to give.

The peculiar position in which the boy found himself placed will at once be perceived.

Tugging at the door, Charlie at last managed to start it, and he was just about to pull it to, when his ears were greeted by a pitiful cry coming from without amid the falling snow.

"Help! Help! some one, for the love of God!" called a feeble voice.

Charlie thrust his head out and tried to discover what it meant; but just then the train started with a jerk, pulled on a few yards, and then stopped once more.

"Can we get through to the creek?" Charlie heard the conductor ask some one away up ahead where a light burned dimly.

"Yes, track's all blown clear, far's I know," answered a voice.

"Must be Miser—thought it was Bear Creek," muttered Charlie.

Just then the cry for help was repeated again.

It seemed to come from a point close to him.

Charlie leaped out at the imminent risk of not getting back again, and looked around.

He could distinguish absolutely nothing.

The wind, whirling the snow into his face in great gusts, almost blinded him. He found himself wallowing in a drift up to his waist.

"Hello! hello! who are you and where are you?" he shouted.

No answer.

"Help! help! I'm dying!" shouted the voice again. "I am perishing in the snow."

Charlie's big heart gave a bound of sympathy.

"Where are you?" he shouted. "Where are you, friend?"

"I don't know! I'm trying to find the train. Help me, quick, if you're going to. I'm almost gone!"

The voice was very feeble now.

It was on Charlie's left, and as near as he could judge, not very far away.

Whatever was to be done must be done quickly. On ahead the conductor could be heard jawing with the station agent.

"If you want to get to Bear Creek this side of next week, you'd better git your old train a-movin'," the latter was heard to shout. "I don't care nothing at all what you say. The track is clear through to the crick. As to what's to'ther side of the crick I don't know no more than you do, and I don't care."

Evidently the train might be expected to move on at any moment, and Charlie saw that whatever life saving business he proposed to do, had got to be done at once.

"I'm comin'!" he shouted. "Brace up, friend. I'll be with you in two shakes. Holler again. Keep h-hollerin'. So as I may know which way to go."

He pushed along the line of freight cars guided by the voice.

In a moment he came upon a dark figure lying in the snow, almost buried, only a few feet from the track.

"Get up!" he shouted. "Get up! The station is only just ahead. Go for it. I've got to go on this train."

"Whisky!" gasped the figure—faces were not to be distinguished—"whisky! For God sake give me a drink."

He leaned on Charlie's shoulder so heavily, and seemed so weak altogether, that our hero was in despair.

Just at that moment the forward cars of the long freight train began to start.

"I've got to go!" cried Charlie, as the motion passed from one car to another, with a rattle and a bang. "If you can't walk I'll holler to them at the station to come and get you."

"Don't—don't leave me."

Charlie's arm was clutched the tighter.

"I must! Let go of me!"

"Take me with you. For God sake don't leave me here to die in the snow."

There was just time to boost him into the car and climb after. On the impulse of the moment Charlie did it.

He pulled the door to and turned to face his unexpected guest.

Meanwhile the train rumbled heavily on.

The man had sunk down upon an overturned soap box and sat shivering fearfully.

He was a young, slimly-built person, of about Charlie's age, with an intelligent face, high forehead and big determined gray eyes.

He wore a pair of tattered trousers, an old summer coat and a straw hat. No wonder he shivered, for the coat was buttoned up to his chin in the evident attempt to conceal the absence of a shirt.

"Cold! cold!" he muttered. "Oh, I am so cold." His teeth chattered and his whole body shook. He seemed scarcely able to keep himself on the box. Charlie could not but pity him as he looked on.

"I wish I could do something for you," he said, poking the fire and piling on more coal.

"Y—y—y—c—can't!" chattered the tramp—he was evidently nothing else—"I—I shall never get over this night I fancy. Oh, gracious, ain't I cold."

"Take my overcoat," cried Charlie sympathizingly.

"No, no. You'll be cold yourself."

"That's nothing. Take it."

"No."

"I say yes."

"God bless you. You have saved my life," muttered the young man as Charlie insisting, helped to pull the heavy ulster round the shivering form.

But Charlie felt very doubtful whether good would come out of his kindness or not.

He had received the most positive orders from Mr. Strang to admit nobody to the car. Contrary to these orders he had taken this man in with him.

"But what could I do?" thought the boy. "Leave him to perish in the snow?"

He saw that he couldn't, and he settled himself down to make the best of the situation just as it was.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Jim Lucas."

"How did you happen to be out there?"

"I was riding on the bumpers between the next car and one beyond. I got on at Kit Carson. When we stopped I thought it was Bear Creek and got off. I was so cold and stiff that I just tumbled down in the drift. I'd a-died if it hadn't been for you."

"Working your way East?"

"Yes. I've been tramping about Colorado for a year. Couldn't get anything to do. It wasn't any use to try. Look at me, I'm not used to hard labor. Nobody will give work to a fellow like me."

"Where are you from?"

"I'm from Boston. I was a fool to go West without any money. I might better have starved in Boston than to have come to a wretched country like this."

"This country is all right for those who keep themselves straight and are willing to work," replied Charlie. "I never had any trouble in making a living out here."

"You're acquainted."

"That makes a difference, perhaps, but I work hard and let whisky alone."

"And I don't. Spit it right out," broke in the tramp, gloomily. "I drink whenever I get a chance, but I'm going to try to do better if I can only get to civilized parts again."

Charlie poked the fire meditatively.

What should he do? His mind was very much disturbed.

"Look here," he said, at last. "You'll have to get out of this as soon as we reach Bear Creek. This is a private car. I'm under positive orders not to let any one in."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Where's the car going?"

"To Boston."

Charlie was sorry as soon as he had said it. He could see the fellow's eyes sparkle, and it was easy to imagine what was going through his mind.

"Couldn't you let a fellow ride through with you?" he asked. "I'll do almost anything if you only will."

"It can't be done," replied Charlie, decidedly.

"Say, young fellow, what's your name?"

"Charlie Terrill."

"Were you ever hungry?"

"Well, not as you mean it, perhaps."

"I don't believe you ever were. I don't believe you have the faintest idea of how I feel now. Why, I haven't eaten a thing in three days—not a mouthful. I want to get home. I want to live to do better. I'll lay down and let you walk all over me if you'll only let me stay in this car."

"I can't do it; but you shall have something to eat right off now. I've got plenty. Just wait."

"Why can't you do it? What have you got here, anyhow?"

The eyes of the tramp wandered curiously about the car as Charlie proceeded to cut several slices from a loaf of bread, to which he added a liberal piece of cheese.

"I can't say anything about it," he replied.

"Here, eat this, and if you want more you shall have it, but don't say anything about riding in this car, for it can't be did."

Jim Lucas seized the bread and began to devour it ravenously.

"All right, I won't bother you," he said. "I s'pose you've got bullion or something in them boxes. However, you needn't be afraid of me. I'm only a tramp, I am, but I'm honest. Never stole a cent's worth in all my life. Hello, what's up now?"

"They're stopping again."

The train was moving slower now. In a moment it came to a standstill.

"We can't be at the creek yet," exclaimed Charlie.

"We can't be a great way from it," replied Lucas, "that's sure."

Charlie pulled open the door and peered out. He could see nothing but the whirling snow-flakes, however. There was nothing to indicate that they had reached the little settlement at Bear Creek.

"No, this ain't the creek," said Lucas, who was looking over his shoulder.

"I shouldn't think so. Great Scott! What was that?"

Crack! Crack!

Two shots had rung out ahead.

Then came the sound of voices shouting—lights flashed—evidently there was something wrong.

"Hey! What's the matter?" yelled the voice of the conductor, his lantern flashing down by the caboose.

Charlie seized a rifle which hung against the side of the car.

"Great Heavens! They are attacking the train!" he gasped. "Help me, will you? There's a thousand pounds of gold in this car!"

He was sorry as soon as he said it, for he could see the tramp's eyes glisten.

It was too late to help it, however.

"Got another gun?" asked Lucas.

"Yes, yes, over in the corner there."

The tramp seized it.

"Look here, Terrill," he said; "I'm going to stand by you. You saved my life. I'm a tramp, but I'm not ungrateful. I'll fight for you and your gold to the last!"

CHAPTER IV.

A SMASH-UP ON THE SOUND.

"Now I wonder what all this is about?" muttered Old King Brady, the famous New York detective, as he sat looking over his morning mail on a certain day some two weeks subsequent to the sudden death of Mr. Strang in the Leadville telegraph office.

The letter which had called forth this exclamation was a brief one, and read as follows:

"DEAR SIR,—If you can devote a few days to a matter of great importance, please call upon us at your earliest convenience. It is highly desirable that we should secure your services in this matter, and we are willing to compensate you liberally for your loss of time, although it is not a case for a detective of your standing, strictly speaking. What we want is to secure the services of a man whom we know we can trust. Very truly yours,

"HORSLEY & DRUM, No. — Dey street.

"MR. JAMES BRADY, New York."

"There's some shenanigan about that letter," muttered the old detective, as he re-read it. "I don't know why I think so, either, but I feel sure I am right."

It was one of those strange impressions which Old King Brady sometimes had.

Was he right or wrong?

It was seldom that his impressions led him astray.

In course of the morning the detective visited Dey street, and walked into the store of Messrs. Horsly and Drum.

They were dealers in mining machinery, occupied an entire floor, and altogether presented the appearance of being a pretty solid concern.

Announcing himself to a polite clerk, the detective was shown into the presence of Mr. Horsly, whom he found seated at a desk looking over a pile of papers. There was a tall, black-bearded man, well dressed, with a half burnt cigar between his teeth, sitting beside him. The pair were engaged in earnest conversation as Old King Brady came in.

"Just the very man we want to see!" exclaimed Mr. Horsly. "Mr. Brady, I'm happy to meet you, sir. Often heard of you. This is my friend, Mr. Stitt, of Leadville. This is the famous Old King Brady, Stitt."

Mr. Stitt nodded in an off-hand way. Evidently he was not impressed.

"You wanted to see me, Mr. Horsly?" remarked the detective, seating himself.

"Yes, sir. Do you smoke?"

"Thank you, yes."

"I think you will find that cigar all right."

"It seems a good one. What was it you wanted?"

Mr. Horsly rose and locked the office door.

"The fact of the matter is the business is so trivial that you may wonder why we don't get some bull-headed fellow with a big bludgeon to attend to it," said Mr. Horsly. "The reason is

we couldn't trust the bull-head—we can trust you."

"So you said in your letter. Let us understand each other at once."

"Did you ever hear of the Golden Nugget Mine at Leadville, Colorado, Mr. Brady?"

"No, not to my recollection."

"Well, you kin jest best your bloomin' eyes agin a bar'l o' sour cider there is sech a mine, an' it's a he one!" remarked Mr. Stitt.

Old King Brady smiled.

Evidently Mr. Stitt was not a graduate of Harvard or Yale.

"Yes, there is such a mine," continued Mr. Horsly, "and in spite of my friend's enthusiasm, Mr. Brady, it is a mine which has never proven very profitable until recently. The case is just here.

"Some months ago a new pay streak was discovered in one of the drifts of the Golden Nugget, and it has proved very profitable. It seemed desirable to keep its existence a secret from the stockholders, and it was so kept.

"Meanwhile work progressed on it until about three weeks ago, at which time about a thousand pounds of gold was run through our mill and shipped East. You follow me so far?"

"Yes, sir."

"The circumstances under which this gold was shipped were somewhat peculiar," continued Mr. Horsly. "Our superintendent managed it. He loaded it in a freight car on the D. & R. G. and started it for Boston in charge of a responsible young man. He did not, however, give this young man any clew to the actual destination of the gold for certain reasons."

"And blame good ones," blurted Mr. Stitt.

"The only trouble was Bill Strang hustled so lively that day that his heart went back on him and he croaked."

"Croaked?" smiled Old King Brady.

"He means died," said Mr. Horsly, looking a trifle disgusted. "Yes, Mr. Brady, our friend Strang went suddenly—very suddenly. In fact, so suddenly as to slightly confuse matters. He never gave the young man any instructions, and as Stitt was away in the mountains on important business——"

"Trying to jump a claim at Nigger Gulch," interposed Mr. Stitt. "Spit it right out, Horsly."

"Be good enough not to interrupt me, Stitt," said Mr. Horsly, sharply. "As I was saying, Mr. Stitt being away on important business, no one knew anything about this gold having been shipped once Mr. Strang was dead. You grasp the idea?"

"It's about as clear as mud, Mr. Horsly. A thousand pounds of gold started East in a car in charge of a young man who didn't know where he was going. I can scarcely understand."

"But there were reasons, Mr. Brady, reasons. Stitt knew, but Stitt was away. Strang was to have notified me as soon as the car started, but before he had a chance to do that he died."

"And what do you want with me, gentlemen?" asked Old King Brady, impatiently.

Above all the old detective hated to be employed by secretive people. Messrs. Horsly & Stitt seemed to be men of the most secretive kind.

"We want you to go to Boston, receive this gold, and accompany it to New York," said Mr. Horsly.

"I thought you already had a car chartered?"

"Only to Boston."

"Why don't you let the young man finish his job, and come through with it to New York?"

"We don't want any one to know that the gold is coming to New York, Mr. Brady, and that's the truth. We want to have the whole matter privately managed by some responsible party, and you are the very man."

"And that is all you want of me?"

"That's all."

"Where is this car now?"

"Well, that's what we don't exactly know. You see the train was attacked by train robbers somewhere in Colorado, and the conductor killed before they were finally driven off. All his way-bills were missing when they found the body which was not for several days, for there was a big lot of snow on the ground.

"A tarnation big lot!" interrupted Stitt.

"Stitt," said Mr. Horsly, "be quiet. As I was saying, Mr. Brady, we don't just know where it is, but it must be somewhere very close to Boston. Here are all the papers. The car was the B. & O. white line; has the picture of a globe painted on it dividing the letters B O. The number is 2,999."

"And I am to look for the car at Boston."

"Not at Boston. At a place called the Chemistry. It is in the town of Waltham. We have arranged to have the car left there so that it need not come to the city at all. You are to go to this place, show these papers to the young man and take charge. If he says anything about pay for his services, tell him to communicate with me. Now, then, will you undertake the job?"

"Yes, sir," replied the detective, "but may I be permitted to ask why this gold was not put in the hands of the express company, and sent East in the usual manner?"

"Why, certainly," replied Mr. Horsly, looking just a little bit uneasy. "I told you before there were good reasons for that."

"Would you object to naming those reasons, Mr. Horsly?"

"Well, really I had rather not. They are important and of a strictly private nature."

"Humph! In other words it's none of my business."

"Now really, Mr. Brady, I didn't intend——"

"No matter. When do you want me to start for Boston?"

"At once. The car is expected to arrive at the Chemistry some time to-morrow. We have positive assurance of this. Indeed it has already left Rochester and is on a fast freight."

"Very good. Let me have the papers and I'll attend to it. Where do you want the gold delivered?"

"At this office."

"It shall be done."

"What will the expense be, Mr. Brady?"

"Whatever outlay there may be, and the charge for my time."

"And your time is worth?"

"In a simple matter like this twenty-five dollars a day."

"That's all right. Go ahead."

"Good-day," said Old King Brady, and he left the store at once.

"He bites," said Mr. Stitt, as soon as the outer door closed behind the detective.

"Sure!" replied Mr. Horsly, "but you came near exciting his suspicions. I tell you what it is, Stitt, if our little game was known to that man no amount of money would induce him to help us. Still it is necessary that some one who has got sand should look after that gold. If those outlaws who attacked the car were really the celebrated James Boys, we cannot consider ourselves safe until we actually have the boxes in the store, and we can't give it to the express company. This man Brady knows all about the James Boys. He is the only detective who ever got the best of them. That's why I wanted him. I tell you if he says that gold shall be delivered here it'll be delivered here, and you can bet on it every time. And of course he'll never bother his head about us anyway. Why should he? It's none of his business anyhow. I feel safer now

than I've done any time since I heard that Strang was dead."

Now Mr. Horsly was mistaken.

Old King Brady only had one business—to ferret out and punish crime.

But he put no restrictions on that business. Wherever crime came in his way he was ready for it. It made no difference whether he expected to be paid for his labor or not.

If Mr. Stitt, instead of stopping to talk, had followed Old King Brady, he would have been interested to find that he crossed directly over to the Western Union office and sent the following dispatch:

"J. HARKER, Sheriff, *Leadville*:

"Man Stitt, 5—8, black beard, stoutish, mole on left side upper lip. Who is he?"

"BRADY."

By three o'clock that afternoon Old King Brady received the following dispatch at his office:

"JAMES BRADY, *New York*:

"Man Stitt, rascal. Gambler, claim broker, generally crooked, but has never been tripped up yet. Look out for him."

"HARKER."

"I knew he was a rascal as soon as I ever put my eyes on him," muttered Old King Brady. "Those two fellows in Dey street are crooked. I wonder what it is? Well, unless I run against it I shall not trouble myself, but if I happen to catch on to their little game, let them beware."

Really it was an unwise move on the part of Mr. Horsly to employ Old King Brady.

The fact was the mining machinery man was worried.

A thousand pounds of gold means a great deal of money.

He wanted its safe delivery at his store assured, and he knew that Old King Brady was just the man to handle the business, therefore he engaged him.

That night the detective started for Boston by the Stonington line.

It was a bad night on the Sound, dark, rainy, cold and foggy.

Old King Brady, after pacing the main deck until his fifth cigar was smoked, began to think about turning in, when all at once a man walked down the main stairway of the boat and crossed over to the baggage-room and began talking with the darky in charge about something which had been checked earlier in the evening.

The man did not notice Old King Brady, but the detective took particular notice of him.

"Where have I seen those eyes before?" he muttered.

He moved to one side in order that he might get a better look at the man.

"Good heavens! That fellow is in disguise!" he added. "He has got on a red wig!"

A red wig and a black beard!

No wonder the combination gave the man a peculiar appearance. Still the wig was not actually red—only reddish-brown; but the funny part of it was at the back, a few stray hairs hung below the wig as black as the beard, which certainly was not false.

Just then the man turned and passed up-stairs again, and thus it happened that he never caught sight of the detective at all.

"Stop," muttered Old King Brady. "Let me think—I—good heavens, it's Jesse James!"

The memory of those eyes had come over him like a flash.

Naturally Old King Brady was excited.

Twice the old detective had been within an ace of failing the noted outlaw. If he could accomplish this now he felt that it would be the crowning act of his long and successful career.

But could he do it?

Not on board the boat, certainly.

They were now sailing close to the shore of Connecticut, and consequently were under the jurisdiction of the laws of that state.

Old King Brady was empowered only to make arrests in the State of New York. There was the difficulty, and it was one not easily overcome.

"I must assure myself first that it is Jesse," thought the detective, "and then I will see what can be done."

He hurried upstairs after the man and not a little to his amazement saw him enter the state-room next to his own.

Here was an interesting state of affairs!

Was Old King Brady destined to pass the night separated from Jesse James only by a thin board partition?

Remember, Jesse had threatened to shoot him on sight.

Under such circumstances it is not to be wondered at that the detective dismissed the idea of sleep.

He now opened the state-room door, and gliding in softly locked it after him.

Placing his ear against the partition he listened for a long time, but could hear nothing but the indefinable hum of voices talking in low tones.

Suddenly there was a loud yawn, and a voice was heard to say. "I'm dead tired out, Jess. Let's go down and get a snifter and then turn in."

Two men left the state-room a moment later on. As they passed along the cabin keen eyes were watching them.

One of the pair was the man who had entered the state-room, the other a tall, strapping fellow, with long, black hair, who wore big boots and a broad brimmed white hat.

"That's one of the gang sure," thought Old King Brady as he cautiously locked the door again. "Let's me see, which one is he? His face is rather familiar. I rather think it's Clel Miller. They'll be back in a moment, and I must get to work."

He drew a small gimlet from one of his many pockets and cautiously bored a hole through the partition.

"That's all right," he muttered. "Now I can hear. I'll keep quiet till they come back."

He had not long to wait.

He had left his door open slightly and presently he heard quick footsteps approaching.

Looking out cautiously the old detective found fresh subject for amazement.

The man who was hurrying through the cabin was none other than Mr. Stitt.

"What in the name of sense is he doing here?" thought the detective.

His amazement would have scarcely been equal to his disgust if he could have read a telegram then quietly reposing in Mr. Stitt's pocket.

It was worded as follows:

"A party in New York by the name of Brady has been making inquiries about you. Look out."

JIM."

Evidently the secrets of the Leadville police were not as carefully guarded as they might have been.

Old King Brady did not like it.

"Is that man following me?" he pondered. "He must have kept in hiding ever since we left New York, as I should certainly have run across him. Thunder! this is growing to be decidedly interesting. It looks as though I had got myself into more serious business than watching a few boxes of gold."

He kept his eyes fixed on Mr. Stitt and saw him enter a stateroom on the opposite side of the saloon.

Just then the two men who had left the next stateroom were seen approaching. Old King Brady closed the door and heard them enter their room.

"Now we'll get to bed," he could hear Jesse's well-remembered voice say as he applied his ear to the gimlet hole.

"Hardly worth while, is it?" asked the outlaw's companion. "We've got to turn out at two o'clock."

"That don't make no difference. Perhaps you can get along without sleep, Clel, but I can't. Half a loaf is better than no bread."

"It is, Clel Miller," thought the detective.

He was all attention now.

"Oh, I don't raise no objections. Thought mebbe we could spend the time at a little game."

"No, no; we'll have game enough after we scoop in them ten boxes of gold."

Old King Brady heard and wondered.

Could Jesse be bound for Boston on the same errand as himself?

He pressed his ear more closely to the hole.

"Wait till we do?" he heard Clel Miller growl.

"When you catch the woodchuck it's time to holler. We've made a sweet mess of the biz so far, Jess."

"Well, so we have, but that don't follow we don't succeed. There's only one thing I am afraid of."

"What's that?"

"Old King Brady."

"What! That blasted detective!"

"Yes, dog on him! He's spiled my [game] twict. He may do it again."

"But, man, he never heard of this gold."

"How do you know he didn't?"

"How do you know he did?"

"I don't. I'm only supposin'."

"Oh, suppose your sister! You might suppose this blasted steamer will go to the bottom before morning."

"Indeed, and it may, Clel."

"Wall, I afn't a-wastin' time supposin' nothin'. Yer wusin' Frank with yer growlin'."

"I don't see why I didn't get a letter from Frank," said Jesse. "He promised he'd write soon's ever he got to Boston."

"Mebbe he's on a tear."

"Frank never goes on tears when there's business on hand. His work is to locate that ere car, and you kin jest bet your sweet life he'll do it, too."

"How's he goin' to do it?"

"I don't know. You leave Frank alone for that. He told me to meet him at the Tippins House on Portland street, and I'm goin' ter do it. That's all I know and all I care about. I leave the rest to Frank."

"Ever been in Boston before, Jess?"

"No, and never want to go again. I come east to New York once, you know, but I didn't make much out'n that. Mother old Missouri's good enough fer me."

"Wall, I guess I orter know about that. I've heerd you tell the story often times enough, but say, Jess, if you won't have a game let's turn in."

"I'll turn in when I get blame good and ready. Clel, I wisht you'd quit bothering me. I—holy heavens, what is this?"

A fearful shock, a crashing of timbers, mingled with a loud and violent hissing of steam.

Jesse James went sprawling on the stateroom floor, Clel Miller fell on top of him and on top of Clel came the broken boards of the partition between their stateroom and the next, while above all fell a tall, elderly man, whose face as he lay was bent down over that of the noted outlaw beneath.

"Old King Brady! Great grief!" breathed Jesse, in terror.

"I'm right on to you, Jesse James," spoke the man on the top of the pile.

"I should say you were! Gosh! I only wisht

I had a show to blow your spyin' brains to blazes!" groaned Jesse.

But he hadn't.

Now came a second and more tremendous shock.

"We're sinking! Oh, God h'massy! we're sinking!" roared Clel from the middle of the pile.

And so they were.

There had been a smash-up on the Sound.

It was written that the papers next day should have one of the greatest steamboat disasters of the age to record.

CHAPTER V.

THE JAMES BOYS ATTACK THE CAR.

OF course, seeing the heading, the reader very naturally supposes that we are going to describe the attack upon the car containing the thousand pounds of gold which took place upon the plains that snowy night, as mentioned by Mr. Horsly in the conversation with Old King Brady, which took place in the presence of Mr. Stitt.

That's a mistake.

The reader knows already that the attack proved a failure, consequently where is the use of describing it?

The attack to which our chapter heading refers took place in the prosaic State of Massachusetts, the land of baked beans and steady habits, where train robbers and outlaws are unheard of things.

But about that other attack we must say a word.

It was sharp work for a few moments.

The whole thing had been well planned by the James Boys, and would no doubt have succeeded had it not been for the snow.

The fight was short, sharp and decisive. Though the conductor was killed, the train people were victorious, for the engineer shot the man who "held him up," and drove ahead into the town of Bear Creek. After that they saw the outlaws no more.

Day followed day, and still the car of gold went rolling on.

The boundaries of a dozen States were passed, and the end of the journey was near.

And had Charlie Terrill stuck to his post, continuing his lonely ride to the end?

Yes, but the ride was not lonely.

Charlie had had company in the car ever since the night of the storm.

Could he be expected to drive out one who had fought for him bravely at the moment of peril?

Hardly.

Without instructions, with no knowledge whatever of how he was to dispose of the treasure when Boston was reached, Charlie and his car are still moving.

It is night—midnight. They are running through a country unknown to our hero. It is bitterly cold and snowing again. Charlie sits on one side of the fire, Jim Lucas the tramp on the other. They know that they are rapidly nearing their destination, and are wondering what they shall do.

"How far are we from Boston now, Jim?" asked Charlie, putting a shovelful of coal into the stove.

"Well, I'm blest if I can tell you. I never was out on the Fitchburg road in my life; we can't be a great way, though."

"Twenty miles?"

"Not so much, I think. The last place we stopped at was Concord. That's where one of our State prisons is located. I don't think that's much more than twenty miles out of town."

All over Eastern Massachusetts Boston is always spoken of as "town."

"Well, I'm glad we're there, Jim, and I'm

sorry. I have no more idea what to do with my load than a babe unborn."

"I feel just the same way, Charlie," answered Lucas. "I don't know any more what I am to do with myself than you know what you are going to do with your gold."

"Have you no friends in Boston?"

"Not a friend—all dead or gone off. I've got to begin life all over again now."

Charlie began to poke the fire meditatively. For some few moments he did not speak.

"What are you thinking about?" asked his companion, after a little.

"I was thinking what I should do with the gold, and also what I should do with you."

"With me? Why, you haven't got anything to do with me."

"Well, I think I have. Do you think I've forgotten your bravery at Bear Creek? Not much! Who can tell? If you hadn't fought as you did we might have been captured, and then——"

"Pshaw! what's the use in talking about that? It's all over now. I only did my duty. We've seen the last of the James Boys, and here in the old Bay State are just as safe with this gold as if we had only a car load of sand."

Were they? Was Jim Lucas right?

Let the sequel show.

"Besides," added Jim, glancing at his warm and comfortable clothes, "you've paid me up for that. Don't these duds count for something? Wasn't I fitted up in Chicago like a prince at your expense?"

"Oh, that's nothing. I tell you what I was thinking about, Jim."

"What?"

"That you'd better come back to Leadville with me. If I only had a good, honest fellow who I could trust to help me with my newsstand I could double the business. You're just the fellow I want, it seems to me."

"I wouldn't go back into that dreadful country for a thousand dollars, Charlie."

"There's nothing the matter with the country if you only handle yourself right, Jim."

"But I won't go, though. I'm just as much obliged to you. Don't let's talk any more about it; let's talk about the gold. Haven't you formed any plan?"

"Well, yes, I have a plan, but I don't know how it will work."

"What is it?"

"When we get to Boston I think I will leave you with the car and hunt up the superintendent of this railroad and give the gold over into his charge. I don't know what else to do. I have sent telegram after telegram to Mr. Strang and can't get any answer. I'm afraid something has happened to him, though I have some idea that he may have come East and that we may meet him upon the arrival of the train."

"Which will be some time between now and morning."

"We'll stick by the car till morning anyhow."

"Of course; we'll have to do that. Hello, we're stopping again."

The train was beginning to slack up, and it presently stopped altogether.

Footsteps were heard hurrying along, and the voice of the conductor calling out to know what was the matter. From what was being said outside, the boys concluded that some one had flagged the train.

"There's something wrong I'm afraid," said Charlie, uneasily, throwing open the door.

It was snowing hard, and beside thick woods, Charlie could see nothing.

"Can't you see him?" he heard the conductor roar.

"No, can't see nothing of him," a voice replied, "but I see the light for sure."

"Some one foolin' with us!" shouted the con-

ductor. "Start her up, Bill, but go slow. We're almost to Waltham. It's a straight run. Blest if I see how there can be any trouble here."

The train started with a jerk, and Charlie gave a try at the door.

"Look out!" he heard Jim shout suddenly.

How quick it all happened!

Why he had not foreseen it Charlie could never understand.

He wheeled around, only to find himself seized by the throat and forced back.

Three men armed to the teeth had suddenly leaped into the car.

Jim was already down.

"Shut the door, Clel," breathed the man who held Charlie captive, in a hoarse voice. "Shut it quick. It's all right now. Your scheme was a dandy. Off we go. Young feller, if you ez much ez wink yer eye there'll be a funeral. We hain't got nothing against you. All we want is them there boxes of gold."

All!

As though this was not enough to make Charlie feel sick and faint.

Had he passed through the dangers of the Western country successfully to be robbed and murdered now just as the journey was almost done?

Now that he had an opportunity to look at his captor, he saw that he was a tall, sallow-faced man, whose countenance looked long enough to belong to a Methodist minister.

He was dressed in rough, ill-fitting clothes, which gave him something the appearance of a laborer. Charlie at once recognized a resemblance in the face to pictures he had seen of Frank James.

Nor could he doubt that the big black bearded man who held Jim Lucas down was Jesse. In the papers he had so long dealt in Jessie's physiognomy had often been represented. Charlie Terrill knew him at a glance. The other man was a stranger. Probably he was one of the gang.

"Get up! Stand over there against the side of the car and drop your weapons," commanded Frank, keeping Charlie covered with his revolver.

Of course our hero could do nothing but obey.

Jesse gave the same order to Jim Lucas; the other man guarded the door.

"Well," exclaimed Jesse, for it was indeed the notorious outlaw, "we've got through with that job, boys, pretty slick."

"Don't let's holler till we're out of the woods," growled Frank. "Say, young feller, are you going to drop your weapons or not?"

Reluctantly Charlie obeyed, throwing down his two revolvers first, then his knife. As for the rifles, they were over in the opposite corner of the car, out of reach.

Jim had nothing to give up, but as the bandit king refused to believe this, he "went through" him, finding that he had told the truth.

Meanwhile the train rolled slowly on.

"Be quick," growled Frank. "We're going to stop at a station in a minute. What's to be did?"

"I'm going to pitch these two out in the snow," said Jesse. "We'll relieve you of your job, Mr. Terrill. I'll run this car into Boston—see?"

"Gentlemen, for Heaven's sake be careful! I've got——"

"I don't give a blame what you've got or what you say!" burst in Frank, as Charlie tried to speak now for the first time. Open that door, Clel. Softly, now."

"Help! Help! Thieves! Murder!" shouted Jim Lucas.

"Shoot him!" breathed Frank.

"This is the way I'll fix him!" hissed Jesse.

He gave poor Jim one push which sent him flying out of the car.

"Chuck out t'other one," he said.

Before Charlie could raise a hand to defend himself all three were upon him.

The next thing our hero knew he was lying half buried in a snow bank.

And the freight train rumbled on, disappearing in a moment round a curve.

Put yourself in Charlie Terrill's place—fancy his feelings, if you can.

Meanwhile the conductor in the caboose, the engineer and the brakemen were totally ignorant of what had taken place.

Long before the rumble of the heavy freight cars had passed out of hearing, Charlie was on his feet and floundering about in the snow.

"Jim! Jim! Oh, Jim!" he called.

"Hello! Here I am," responded a voice at a short distance away on the left, and Charlie caught a glimpse of a dark figure wallowing toward him through the drift.

"Great heavens! What shall we do?" gasped Charlie, as they came together. "Oh, Jim, I could kill myself! I'd do it, too, only that those fellows took my shooters away."

"Don't be an ass," replied Jim, coolly. "I'm the sickest man this side of Oshkosh, but I ain't going to be a fool. First of all, are you hurt?"

"No; the snow saved me. How is it with you?"

"Oh, I'm all right. It was as soft as a feather bed where I fell, and the train wasn't running more than fifteen miles an hour. This is a pretty kettle of fish, I vow."

"Pretty kettle of fish! Jim, I'm used up! I can never show my face in Leadville again."

"Don't be down-hearted. We may do something yet."

"May do something!" almost shouted Charlie. "May do something! You are talking like a wild man. Do you know who those fellows were?"

"No, do you?"

"Of course. Don't you remember Bear Creek?"

"Well, I guess so. You don't mean to say——"

"That they are the James Boys? Yes, I do mean to say it. They are differently rigged up, but they are the same old James Boys. I knew them at the first glance."

"Gosh!" ejaculated Jim, leaning against a telegraph pole. "This is a rich state of affairs."

"Ain't it? The long and short of the business is, the James Boys have followed me all the way from Colorado, they've got ahead of me, and have captured the car and the gold."

"And you couldn't make nothing else out of it if you talked a month," answered Jim.

"What's to be done?"

"Blest if I know."

"We've got to get to the nearest station, I suppose, and telegraph to Boston to have them look out for the car on its arrival," sighed Charlie. "Come on, old chap. There's nothing for it but to take shank's mare, and you want to drive her along lively, too."

They started down the track on the run.

Snowing as it was, they could see next to nothing, but from what little of the surrounding scenery was distinguishable the country looked as wild as in the West.

Great ledges of rock protruded through the snow here and there. Now it was a piece of thick woods, now a stretch of open meadow. Once they passed a graveyard, beyond which came a frozen river. Still no sign of houses, or anything to indicate that they were in the vicinity of a town.

"We can't be far from Waltham," panted Jim at last. "If it was only light now I haven't the least doubt we'd see it straight ahead of us. Hello, here's something in the shape of a house."

"So it is, and a big one!" echoed Charlie as a

large building rose in dim outline before them.

"Must be a depot."

"No, an ice-house."

"That's encouraging anyhow."

A little way beyond the ice-house they came to freight sheds, then a coal-yard, then a big brick factory, in another moment a large mass of brick buildings—another factory evidently—rose on their right.

"We're getting somewhere, that's sure," said Charlie. "There ought to be a depot around here soon."

There was, but when they reached it they found the place closed and the platform deserted. So far they had not encountered a living soul.

Charlie leaned back against the brick wall of the building pretty thoroughly tired out.

"There must be a telegraph office here somewhere," he said.

"Maybe moved on the other side," suggested Jim.

"No. It's here. Don't you see the sign? The operator must have gone off somewhere. Hello! Here comes a lot of fellows now."

Directly in front of the depot was a branch road leading off at right angles with the main track behind the big brick factories; as Charlie spoke Jim saw a number of men approaching one of whom carried a lantern, they were walking between the tracks and conversing in loud tones.

"We'll hev ter leave it where it is till morning. Can't do nothin' to-night," said one.

"What was in it?" asked another of the party.

"Hanged if I know. I got orders to run the car round to the Chemistry and leave it there, and here the blame thing goes tumbling off the bridge kersmash."

"You might have knowed it. Oughtn't to hev tried a night like this."

"That's the way. Lay all the blame on me."

"I'll lay it where it belongs; but say, where's them three fellows what was in that car when we began to switch her? They made noise enough about it. But I didn't see nothin' on 'em afterward. By golly if any of 'em stayed in they're dead ducks now."

"Hadn't we better go down to the river an' see?"

"No. What's the use? I seen two on 'em get out when you told 'em the car 'd got to be switched off, an' I guess 't'other did. We'd a-heard him holler when the car went down I guess."

"It made so'thunderin' much noise that I don't believe we'd a-heard nothin'," was the answer.

The men had reached the station platform by this time.

Two of them pushed on, but a third proceeded to open the door of the depot with a key, and went in, stamping the snow from his feet.

"Great guns! what do you suppose that means?" whispered Charlie to Jim.

"Sounds mighty like as though they were talking about our car," breathed Jim in reply.

"Don't it? I'll bet you what you like that's just what it is."

"But they wouldn't have drilled the car out of the train. Why should they?"

"That fellow said they had orders to leave it at some chemistry."

"That's all nonsense. Why should they send our car to a chemistry?"

"But the three men? Was there any other car in the train with three men inside?"

"Not as I know of."

"Then it must be ours."

"It can't be, I tell you."

Just then a train came thundering into the station. It was a very long train and had a great

many Pullman cars attached, which looked as if they might have come a long distance.

It only stopped an instant, just long enough to allow one passenger to alight, an elderly man who wore a big slouch hat and an ulster buttoned up around his throat.

He paid no attention to the boys, but walked directly into the depot and disappeared.

"Say, I think we ought to go over and see what all that talk about the car means," said Jim, as the train rolled out of the station.

"Precisely what I was about to suggest when it came in," replied Charlie. "Come on."

They hurried across the main track, and following the branch soon came to a high trestle-work partly over a river and partly above the broad gully through which the river ran.

"Ticklish business going out over that bridge," said Jim.

"Yes, but all the same I'm going."

"Don't you see how the snow has drifted in below there?" said Jim, pointing down under the bridge close to the bank of the river.

"Say, that ain't snow!" cried Charlie. "Look, Jim, look! It's a white freight car!"

"By George, you're right."

"It's got B. O. on the side."

"And the big globe too!"

"It must be our car then—it is our car! There wasn't another B. & O. car on the train."

They were right. There, down in the bottom of the gully, lay the car of the gold turned over on its side.

But where were the James Boys?

They could hardly have carried the boxes off on their shoulders, yet it seemed very strange that they should have deserted their prize if they were still alive.

CHAPTER VI.

A TOUGH TIME.

"SAVE me! Save me!"

"Give me your hand, and I'll try and pull you up on this chair. It's all I can do."

"Save me! Save me! Save me!"

The man who was struggling in the cold waters of Long Island Sound near Old King Brady kept on yelling for some one to save him, and yet made no effort to save himself.

And yet Old King Brady, who was in just as bad a fix as he was, remained perfectly calm.

Clinging to the big arm-chair which he had seized at the conclusion of the final shock, when the whole upper deck of the steamer had been torn off and unfortunates by the hundred precipitated to their death, he worked his way toward the man by kicking out, grabbed him by the coat collar, and assisted him to get a grip upon the chair.

It was scarcely large enough to support one, much less two.

"Thank you, stranger," gasped the rescued, choking and strangling between his words. "Thank you. I was pretty near gone."

Yet he could swim and Old King Brady couldn't. What was the matter with the man?

A flash of light which at that moment shot over the water told the story, for it enabled Old King Brady to obtain a perfect view of the face of the man, showing him two things of which he had been in ignorance before.

First, the man had been drinking heavily. Second, it was none other than Mr. Horsly's friend, Stitt.

Little had the detective dreamed when he saw Mr. Stitt walking through the cabin that in a short time he would be thrown into his company under such circumstances as these.

Now we would like nothing better than to describe this terrible accident in all its details, but it is scarcely worth while to dwell upon so horrible a scene.

In the dense fog which hung over the Sound that night two steamers had come into a collision, both belonging to the same line—the one going to New York, the other coming from it.

Certainly it seemed as though some one else beside Mr. Stitt must have been under the influence to make such a blunder as this.

Twice was the doomed steamboat struck by its neighbor through some misunderstanding of the pilot's bell.

The first shock tore a great hole in her side, the second sent her to the bottom, and a hundred unfortunate souls with her. Those who were in the main saloon, and who almost before they knew it found themselves struggling for life in icy waters, were the wickedest men on board.

It was all the work of a few moments.

If you had asked Old King Brady how he had managed to clutch the chair which alone had saved him he could not have told.

Neither could he have told what became of the James Boys and Clel Miller.

Somehow he had become separated from them, and just then the chances seemed all in favor of their being dead. Though unable to swim a stroke himself, the detective had been in similar danger before, and was thus able to face the situation calmly, but bravely.

The other steamer was comparatively unharmed, and those on board doing all they could for the hundreds of poor wretches who were struggling for life all about him.

Flash lights had been thrown out over the water, boats had been lowered, and were now engaged in picking up the survivors as rapidly as the work could be done.

All this Old King Brady saw and understood. He realized that if he could only keep cool and hold on, the chances were all in favor of his being saved.

Now had come new danger in the shape of Mr. Stitt, for their united weight threatened at any instant to pull the chair down.

"You want to keep perfectly still if you expect to be saved, my friend!" said the detective with that calmness of manner so characteristic when in great danger. "Can you swim?"

"Yes, a little," was the muttered response. "Oh, God! This is terrible. I can't keep up much longer. We're done for—we might as well give up the fight now as any time. We can never get ashore."

"Give up what you like, Mr. Stitt, only leave me my chair," replied Old King Brady.

The man gave a start which took the chair still lower in the water.

"Who are you that knows my name?" he gasped.

"Don't you know me?"

"No, I'll be blest if I do."

Just then the flash light shown again,

"Old King Brady!" he added thickly. "By time, that beats me."

"What's the matter?"

"I didn't expect to see you."

"Why not? Am I not on my way to Boston on your business and Mr. Horsly's? The strange part of it is that you should be here."

The night was still and the sea calm, but just then the paddles of the steamer gave a turn, sending a swell toward them which dashed over their heads, drawing a howl of despair from Stitt and almost forcing him to let go his hold.

"We are lost! lost!" he cried. "I can never hold out! Brady! Brady! Save me! Do something, for God sake."

"Brace up, man, and don't be a fool," replied the detective. "It will be over in a minute. It's over now! See, the boats are working toward us. If we only have patience we will certainly be saved."

"All very well for you to talk, but I'm drunk," groaned Stitt. "My head is buzzing about fearfully. I am getting so weak that I can hardly keep my hold. Oh, God, this is terrible. Brady, what shall I do?"

"I can do nothing for you, my friend. If you can't hold on I cannot hold you. I can't swim and it's all I can do to hold myself."

"I can't do it—I can't do it!" said Stitt. "I am losing my grip now."

"Then you'll have to die."

"But I don't want to die. I've been a great sinner. If there is a hereafter there'll be no mercy shown me."

"You ought to have thought about that before. It's too late now."

"Can you see the boats?"

"Yes."

"Are they coming this way?"

"Yes, yea."

"Tell them to hurry—call out—yell! I can't; I'm almost gone."

"Help! This way, friends. We're almost gone!" shouted Old King Brady with all his strength.

"Hold on just a moment," came the reply over the water. "We've got others to save. We'll get to you as soon as we can."

"It's no use; I can't hold out," groaned Stitt faintly. "Brady! Brady!"

"What is it, my poor friend?"

"I'm a fraud, I own it. I wish I could live to repent."

"A merciful God will ever show mercy, Mr. Stitt."

"But there'll be none for me. I've been a sinner from the word go. Brady, can you work round close to me? Try; quick, or it'll be too late."

"I'm afraid I can't do it without swamping us both."

"Try, try. There's something in my pocket I want you to have in case I go down."

With a great effort, Old King Brady succeeded in drawing himself around close to the unfortunate man, who was certainly getting weaker with every moment which passed.

"Put your hand in my inside pocket, Brady. So; that's it. Take those papers—they will tell you the truth about that gold. I have been a great sinner—I—"

Again the swell from the steamer's paddle came upon them, drenching Old King Brady from head to foot.

He held on bravely to the chair, which went bobbing up and down furiously, at the same time clutching the papers with the grip of despair.

Water filled his mouth, almost choking him, he could see nothing for an instant. The next and strong hands seized him—they were dragging him into a boat.

"Save him! Save him first! Never mind me," gasped Old King Brady.

"Who? What do you mean, friend?" asked one of the men in the rescuing boat.

And surely there was nothing strange about the question.

When Old King Brady turned his head to look at the chair he saw that there was no longer any one clinging to it, now that they had dragged him into the boat.

No doubt Mr. Stitt told the truth when he said that he had been a great sinner, but he that as it might, he had passed on into "that undiscovered country from which no traveler returns."

Not until Old King Brady found himself snugly in bed in the hotel in New London did he fully realize how near to death he had been.

Then it all came over him with a rush, and he breathed a prayer of thankfulness for his escape.

How kind every one had been!

The steamer, returning on her course, had

landed the rescued at New London, from whence trains could be had to take them to either New York or Boston, as they wished.

But Old King Brady, rejecting both propositions, went to bed.

"I need rest, and I must have it," he thought. "At my age one can't spend half an hour in the salt water in the winter time without danger."

He had plenty of money, which commanded every attention.

With a joram of hot whisky inside, and the blankets wrapped about his shoulders, outside, behold the old detective sitting up in bed with the water soaked wallet he had taken from Mr. Stitt's pocket in his hand.

"I may as well read these papers now," he reflected. "Strange! that they should have been thrown into my hands under such singular circumstances. Looks almost providential. I suppose, though, those poor wretches who went to the bottom out there in the Sound wouldn't think so if they could speak."

He opened the wallet, and beside a good supply of bills—several hundred dollars the total amounted to—he found two or three letters.

They were wet, certainly, but not so damaged that he could not easily read them.

His eyes opened wide when he had perused the first one, and wider when the second was read. A grunt of satisfaction was brought by the reading of the third.

After that the detective turned out the gas and went to sleep.

What was in the letters?

Something highly important evidently.

At present we can only say that they were all three signed by Mr. Strang, late superintendent of the Golden Nugget Mine.

Next morning—it was nearly noon—found Old King Brady at the desk in the office of the hotel where for some time he had been questioning the clerk in relation to the accident.

"No such names as you speak of are in the list published in the Boston papers," said the clerk.

"The names go for nothing. It's the description of those two men that I'm trying to impress upon you, my friend," replied the detective. "Permit me to go over the ground again."

He did so and with great minuteness. The men whom he described were Clel Miller and Jesse James.

"Oh, now I catch on," said the clerk. "Yes, I did see two just such men as you describe. They were brought in here a little while after you were, and promptly proceeded to get drunk. They were about as tough a looking pair, taken altogether, as I ever laid my eyes on. I was thankful when they left."

"Then they have left?"

"Oh, yes, on the train that started at 9:30 for Boston on the Shore Line."

"It's the James Boys. They've been saved and they've managed to get ahead of me," muttered Old King Brady, as he walked away from the desk.

He had hoped it might be otherwise almost, for he felt that the world would have sustained but a small loss had the outlaw brothers gone to the bottom of the Sound.

"What shall I do now?" he reflected. "Go on to Boston and run the risk of meeting them, or take the up country train and make straight for the Chemistry by the Fitchburg railroad without touching Boston at all."

After a brief reflection he decided against the latter plan, and took the train for Boston, which left New London at half-past two o'clock.

It was dark when he reached the city, for in New England the winter days are short.

The depot was a perfect jam with people bound for their homes in the suburban towns. For the

benefit of those who don't know Boston we must say that fully half its daily population live far beyond the city limits. It was just as much as the detective could do to force his way among them and get hold of a "herdic," that funny two-wheeled vehicle, tabooed in every city in America but the "Hub."

"Where to, mister?" asked the driver of the herdic.

"Do you know the Tippins' House?" inquired Old King Brady.

"The Tippins House! Never heard of such a place. You must have got the wrong name, boss."

"No. I haven't. I've got it just right. There's where I want to go."

"Do you know what street it is in?"

"Portland street."

"Portland street!" exclaimed the driver, with a sneer. "Well, no wonder I don't know it if it's on Portland street. You can't expect a fellow to know every bum hotel in town. However, it's all right. I don't seem likely to get any more passengers. Jump in, and I'll take you over to your Tippins House."

"Don't seem to be very popular, this Tippins House," smiled Old King Brady as the herdic switched around the "Common."

They ran down Boylston street to Tremont, down Tremont to that well-known center, Scolly's Square, striking across into Hanover street, then in a moment had turned into Portland street, and the herdic drew up before the despised hotel.

"Well, by gracious! I'm not surprised that he didn't enthuse over the Tippins House," muttered Old King Brady, as he surveyed the premises. "It is just about the hardest looking hole I ever saw."

Is it a fact that there are certain parts of Boston "tougher," as far as they go, than any corresponding part of New York?

We have sometimes thought so. Certainly the outward appearance of the Tippins House bore out this theory, for of all the dirty, rakish looking places Old King Brady had ever laid eyes on, this was certainly the worst.

It was an old dwelling house, which once may have been respectable—even fashionable. The basement, used for a Chinese laundry, was certainly more attractive in appearance than the display of dirty windows and dirtier men to be seen through them crowded about a tall stove on the floor above.

"I can't imagine why Frank James should pick out a place like this to stop at," thought Old King Brady. "But the Tippins House was certainly the name Jesse gave."

He went in and made a few cautious inquiries at the bar, but could learn nothing.

The name James did not appear on the register of the Tippins House, nor did the clerk appear to know any one who bore it, but Old King Brady had expected that.

"They may not be here, after all," he reflected. "Perhaps I'm only losing time."

Nevertheless, he determined to spend the night in the Tippins House and investigate its lodgers for himself.

Hurrying now to the Fitchburg Railroad Depot, he made some inquiry about freight trains from the West, gathering information enough to satisfy him that the car containing the gold could not certainly reach the Chemistry for a good twenty-four hours owing to the snow blockade in the western part of the State. By the time he left the depot it was nearly eight o'clock, and the detective began to feel very much as if he would like something to eat.

There were several "licensed victualers" in sight, but Old King Brady knew enough about Boston to be well aware that to get any victuals

in their establishments, save of a liquid sort, would be quite impossible; he therefore set out to look for a quiet restaurant in some respectable neighborhood and found one in a secluded street in the vicinity of the Revere House, just off Boudoin Square.

Having refreshed the inner man the detective lit a cigar and sallied forth, but he was not the same man who had gone in.

Instead of the smooth face, a long, silky, reddish beard covered the cheeks and chin, matching well a head of hair of the same color, which no one would have ever dreamed was a wig. Hat, coat, shoes—everything was different.

By the help of the restaurant keeper, a boy, a costumer around on Court street, and a few paltry dollars, this marvelous change had been wrought.

"May I leave my things with you?" asked Old King Brady of the restaurant keeper. "I shall probably call around for them in the morning."

"Certainly, sir," was the ready answer. "Leave 'em as long as you like."

Evidently the restaurant keeper considered it quite an honor to be taken into Old King Brady's confidence, and so it was.

"Well, now, I think I'm about right, and I'll just steer for the Tippins House," thought the detective, as he paused a moment to light a cigar.

He was standing on the steps of the restaurant, which happened to adjoin those of a doctor's office next door, and before he had time to blow the match out, a man came hurrying up the doctor's steps and pulled the bell.

Instinctively the detective turned to look at him, and saw Mr. Clel Miller, the right bower of Jesse James.

You may rest assured that the eyes and ears of the detective were open then!

"Doctor in?" asked Clel in agitated tones, of the servant who opened the door.

"No, sir; but I'm expecting him in every moment," replied the girl. "Will you leave your name or wait?"

"Tell him to call round at the Tippins House in Portland street, right away," said Clel. "There's a man very sick there. He can ask for Mr. Hobbs."

"All right," replied the girl, and Mr. Clel Miller vanished down the street.

"It's my chance, by jingo!" thought Old King Brady. "I rather think I can make a few thousand dollars before I sleep to-night, and a little fame, too."

He hurried round to the nearest police-station and was soon in close conversation with the sergeant in charge.

"Really, I don't see how I can do it," said the sergeant. "Have you any warrant?"

"No. Oh, no!"

"Nor requisition, nor nothing?"

"No; nothing of the sort."

"Then what can I do?"

"You can hold him on a charge of some kind till I can wire the Governor of Missouri, can't you?"

"Well, I don't see how I could. Suppose he was to sue me for false imprisonment?"

"Bosh! He'd never dare."

"You might see Captain Binns. I wouldn't advise you to touch the business."

"Where is Captain Binns?"

"Gone home to supper."

"Gone home to supper!" exclaimed Old King Brady disgustedly.

"Well, I kinder guess the captain's gotter eat 's well as t'other folks!" retorted the sergeant.

"Don't police captains never eat nothing in New York?"

"Never," replied Old King Brady gravely, and he hurriedly left the station.

"I must go it alone," he muttered. "I intend to arrest Jesse James to-night, if I die for it. Frank and Clel Miller I'll have to let go."

He called a cab, drove boldly to the Tippins House, and inquired for Mr. Hobbs.

Certainly things had gone most differently from what the old detective had planned.

Instead of the easy case of which Mr. Horsly had spoken, he was having a pretty tough time of it.

Everything had gone crooked from the very start.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD KING BRADY A DOCTOR.

"MR. HOBBS?" said Old King Brady, briskly, walking up to the bar.

"Hobbs? Which Hobbs—what Hobbs? What about Hobbs, anyhow?" replied the clerk, thickly.

Now the clerk, who kept his register and keyboard at one end of the bar, seemed to have been indulging pretty freely in the cup which both cheers and intoxicates since the detective's last call.

Of one thing Old King Brady felt satisfied, however—the man did not see through his disguise.

"I am a doctor," replied the detective. "I have been called to this house to see a patient named Hobbs. I don't know anything about the gentleman. Perhaps there's some mistake."

"It must be that solemn faced feller in No. 20, don't yer think so?" suggested the bar-tender.

"I suppose so. I wish he was out of the house, anyhow. It's a case of jim-jams, doctor. You can go right up," said the clerk.

"Has any other doctor been called? If so I do not care for the case. I know I'm a little late."

"No other that I've seen has been here," replied the clerk. "Top floor—last door on the left."

"Oh, I can find it," said the detective, hurrying up-stairs.

"Jim-jams, eh?" he muttered. "So Clel Miller was right after all, and Frank has been on a tear. I hope to gracious that doctor has not slipped in ahead of me. If he has there's going to be a row."

When he got to the top of the second flight he heard Frank's well remembered voice yelling loud enough to wake the whole neighborhood:

"Take 'em off! Take 'em off! O—h—h—h! Take 'em off, Jess! Don't you see—don't you see! That big black one is twisting himself round my arm! Ha! ha! there he goes! Thank God, I've shaken him! See him glide under the table! Open the door, Jess! Open the door, confound you, and let him go out! Oh! I wish to goodness I'd a-stayed in old Missouri. Who'd ever thought these hotels in Boston was full of snakes!"

"Good heavens! Frank's got 'em bad," thought Old King Brady as he paused outside the door to listen.

He felt that he was safe enough for the moment, for he was sure that the outlaw's shouts had drowned the sound of his footsteps in the hall.

Just then the door opened a trifle and Jesse's rough voice was heard:

"It's gone now, brother. Don't you think any more about it. It won't come back. In a few moments Clel will be here with the doctor. He'll fix you all straight."

"Why, there ain't nothing the matter with me except I'm dyin' for a drink of whisky," growled Frank, in something like his natural voice. "That an' these tarnal snakes is all what ails me. I'd jest like to know how they ever got into this room."

"Don't be a fool, brother," snapped Jesse.

"Now you're yourself again, for a moment. You may as well understand the situation. You've got the jim-jams, and you've got it bad—that's what's the matter with you."

"No, Jess; yer lyin'."

"No, I ain't, nuther. You would drink. I warned you. You know blame well you never could take a drop without making a blamed tank of yourself. What yer want to go and do it for, Frank? Hey?"

For a moment Frank was silent. Old King Brady venturing to peer round the corner of the door caught a glimpse of the interior of the room.

Frank was lying in bed in his shirt-sleeves, while Jesse, still in his rough disguise, stood beside him. There were medicine bottles, a glass and a spoon upon the mantel-piece; one chair and a table completed the furnishing of the room.

"I 'spose you must be right, Jess," said Frank at last. "I own up I have drank a deuce of a lot, but I'll put in some good work all the same."

"What hev you done? This is the first time I've been able to get a straight word out of you, so you'd better tell me now. There's no knowing how soon the fit will come on again."

"It's a-comin' now, Jess. I feel it. Look! look! That blasted snake's just poked his head in through the door!"

"Oh, you git out. It's all imagination. Jest set your mind agin it and you won't see no more of the snakes."

"Can't you give me jest one drink, Jess?"

"No, not half a one. Come, tell me what you've done."

"Well, I've got full particklers about the car."

"Where is it?"

"They expect it down from Fitchburg to-morrow night. I propose we shall meet it somewhere above Waltham. I've been up on the road and picked out the very spot."

"But how are you goin' ter get at it?"

"Flag the train, of course. I've hired a feller to do the job. He'll flag ther train and scoot; meanwhile, we'll watch our chance and jump right in the car. I wouldn't wonder if we could fix it so's the conductor never tumbled at all."

"We won't be able to fix nothing if you don't get yourself straightened out," grumbled Jesse.

"Now, thar yer go a-blamin' me ag'in. Do you want to bring on the fit?" whined Frank.

"No, [no. But I wish the doctor would come."

"It's about time for me to play my game," thought Old King Brady.

He was just about to step forward when Frank gave a wild yell.

"Help me, Jess! help me!" he shouted. "They're coming again! See them! See them! You must see them! There's as many as a dozen coming in the door!"

He clutched the bed with one hand, extending the other forward, while over his face spread an expression of abject terror.

"Lie down there, dog on you!" cried Jesse, bending over the bed. "Lie down, Frank, and don't be a fool. There's nothing to hurt you. Lie down, and I'll shut the door."

By main strength Jesse forced his brother back upon the bed.

Rap, rap, rap! Before Jesse could reach the door and shut it Old King Brady knocked and walked in.

"Hello!" cried Jesse, not a little startled. "Where in time did you spring from, stranger?"

"Help, murder! Oh, great galleys, take 'em off!" yelled Frank. "Can't you see it's the doctor, Jess, you dogon, thick-headed fool! Why don't you tell him to do something to drive these devilish snakes away?"

"Oh, you're the doctor, are you?" snapped Jesse. "Where's Clel Miller? Why in time didn't you come sooner? My brother's got the D. T's. I want you to cure him up right quick, for it's mighty important he should be a well man by to-morrow. Dogon the expense! Say, what's your name?"

"I am not capable of answering more than one question at a time. Mr. Hobbs—I believe the name is Hobbs," was the calm reply. "I was asked to call here by a gentleman who wore his hair long—probably he is the Mr. Miller to whom you refer?"

"You can het yer left ear agin a bar'l of raw cider that ar's Clel Miller," replied Jesse. "However, it don't make no difference s'long's yer a doctor. Cure that man of the D. T's., and I'll give you a twenty-dollar note—catch on?"

"The first thing we want is quiet. Please cease talking, Mr. Hobbs. You must shut the door and be still."

The dimness of the light prevented Jesse from penetrating the detective's disguise. This and the fact that Frank's cries and yells continued, most effectually distracting Jesse's attention.

He muttered something, walked to the door, and closed it. Meanwhile the assumed doctor had bent over Frank in the bed.

"Well, my friend, what's the matter?" he asked kindly, placing his hand on the outlaw's burning forehead.

The sympathy in the touch was genuine. Old King Brady's heart was large and ever full of sympathy for the sick and suffering, no matter what the cause of their suffering might be.

Moreover, Frank might have had a worse doctor. It will be remembered that the detective's only son, Horace Brady, is a practicing physician of no little note.

Living with Horace as he did, Old King Brady could scarcely help picking up some good ideas.

"The matter with me is I see snakes," growled Frank. "That's all, an' I'm blame sure it's enough."

"You have been drinking too much."

"S'pose so."

"Do you see them now?"

"Yes. There's one just crawling off the bed."

"Yet you are quieter."

"When your hand is on my head I'm not a-scared of 'em. Then I know they are not real, but when brother talks to me I think they are."

"Hum! We'll soon fix you," said the detective. "I'm going to give you some medicine that will cure you inside of an hour. How long since you've been asleep?"

"Three nights I haven't slept none."

"I thought so. If you could get one good night's sleep, you'd see no more snakes. Of course you've got to stop drinking, though—you understand that."

"I s'pose so, but I'd give ten dollars for a drink of whisky now."

"If you keep on you'll be a dead man inside of a week. Now you look like a man of more than usual common sense. I think you understand."

"Give me the medicine. I'll take it, Doc," replied Frank. "I see you understand your biz."

Confidence was now established. Confidence between doctor and patient is one half the battle. In this, as in most other things, Old King Brady understood what he was about.

He had a bottle of dyspepsia pills in his pocket, and he gave Frank two. Placing the bottle on the mantel-piece he drew Jesse to one side.

"He's a very sick man," he whispered, "but he mustn't be allowed to think so."

"Dogon it all, you don't mean ter say he's going to die?" said Jesse.

"Not necessarily. The medicine I have given him may help. If it puts him to sleep it surely

will, but there must be other means taken. I want you to come down-stairs with me and get some powders I have in my carriage. They must be given alternately with the pills."

"But I can't leave my brother."

"It will do no harm to leave him. How do you feel now, my friend?"

"Better. A great deal better," replied Frank. "I believe I shall sleep to-night. Them pills done me good."

"Come," whispered the detective. "He's better alone for a few minutes. It wouldn't surprise me at all if you found him asleep on your return."

This was cheering to Jesse, and without further hesitation he followed Old King Brady down-stairs.

Hurrying through the bar-room, Old King Brady descended the steps and stepped into the cab.

"Get in. I want to tell you how to give the powders," he said.

Completely deceived, Jesse stepped into the carriage.

"This is the kind of powder I shall give you!" whispered Old King Brady, thrusting a cocked revolver in his face; "you are my prisoner, Jesse James, up with your hands!"

Jesse breathed a fierce imprecation, and made a motion to draw his own weapon.

The click of the revolver, and the glitter of the determined eye, warned him to have a care.

"Who in time are you?" he growled, as the hands went up reluctantly.

"Look sharp, and I guess you'll know me."

"Dod blast your soul! Yes, I know you now. You are Old King Brady, the detective. Clel has sold me out."

"No he hasn't. Don't wrong your friend."

"Who did it then? Who told you I was here?"

"You, yourself."

"It's a dogoned lie."

"Tut, tut! Be a gentleman. If I was a Missourian probably I should shoot you for that, but as I'm only a New Yorker, I simply say pitch your shooters and your tooth picks over on this seat."

Reluctantly Jesse obeyed.

He couldn't help himself. Old King Brady, as the saying goes, had him dead to rights.

In a moment the outlaw was handcuffed and they sat looking at each other as the cab driver following an order previously given, drove them hurriedly through the streets.

It was over. The detective had accomplished his end. Once more he had the bold bandit king under arrest.

"What are you going to do with me?" demanded Jesse, sullenly.

"I haven't decided yet."

"I s'pose you've poisoned Frank."

"Not at all. I gave him a simple remedy which certainly won't hurt him and may do him good. Beside that Clel called the doctor, and he will soon be on hand."

"Brady?"

"What is it?"

"Don't be a fool."

"Speak a little plainer, can't you?"

"I guess you understand me. You've won. I'm in your power, but I want to get out of it. I'll give you—"

"Stop! Don't you dare to finish that sentence. The man don't live who can bribe me."

"Bosh" muttered Jesse; but he was silenced and said no more.

But what should he do with the big prize he had captured?

The views of the Boston police were peculiar. Old King Brady had had experience in that direction before.

He had arrested Jesse without leave or license

If he could see the chief of the detective bureau with whom he was acquainted, he felt certain that matters could be arranged. The chief of police would do equally well, but with any of their subordinates the chance was not so good, as the laws of Massachusetts require either a warrant or a requisition in a case like this.

Fate seemed dead against the detective that night.

He kept Jesse driving about the streets of Boston for more than two hours without finding any one willing to take him off his hands.

The captain of the nearest precinct station would not—declared he could not.

But the chief of police and the detectives were out of town.

The former was expected at his office in the morning, however, and at last Old King Brady succeeded in getting a policeman detailed to assist him, although he was warned that he held Jesse solely on his own responsibility.

Then he took the outlaw to the Mullin House, on Winter street, and went to bed with him in one of the upper rooms, leaving the policeman to guard the door outside.

He tried his best to persuade them to send and arrest Frank and Clel Miller, but it was no use.

On the principle of the bird in the hand, Old King Brady concluded to stick close to Jesse and let the others go.

Through all the long ride and subsequent happenings Jesse maintained a dogged silence.

It was not until he found himself alone with the detective in the bed-chamber that he began to speak.

"Wall, you done that purty slick, didn't yer?" he said when at last they were ready for bed.

"I flatter myself it wasn't badly done, Brother J.," laughed the detective. "How are you feeling now?"

"I'd feel better if I had a drink."

"I can give you one out of my pocket flask. Here it is. I seldom use the stuff, but in my business I have to at times."

"Same with mine" replied Jesse, coolly gulping down about half the contents of the flask. "What are you going to do with me to-morrow?"

"You'll find out. Better go to bed."

"You ain't going to make me sleep in these irons?"

"I rather think you'll have to or else keep awake."

"Brady, that's barbarous."

"It's highly necessary. I should be the fool you think me if I did anything else."

Jesse muttered something and threw himself on the bed, while Old King Brady sat down in one chair, and putting his feet on another, prepared to keep guard. He was determined not to sleep.

Now usually the detective was able to control his slumbers as he was almost everything else.

In this instance, however, fatigue proved too much for him.

He fell to wondering how Jesse and Clel Miller managed to escape from the wrecked Sound steamer—a question he had not asked simply because his mind was taken up with other things. He would have asked it now, but Jesse seemed to be asleep. Before he knew it the detective was asleep himself.

How long Old King Brady slept is doubtful. It seemed but a moment, but the lapse of time must have been nearer an hour. He awoke with a start to hear a fearful cry ringing in his ears.

It was the cry of fire.

It sounded through the corridors of the old hotel, arousing the guests from their slumbers.

Really, it seemed as though Old King Brady managed to escape one danger only to fall into another.

But when fire is called there is no time to be lost. The detective sprang to his feet at once.

A dense, suffocating smoke filled the room. Some one had turned the gas out, or possibly turned it off from the entire building. It was pitch dark. Old King Brady could hardly breathe. A loud crackling outside the door warned him that the fire was not far away.

"James, James! Jesse James!" he called.

There was no answer.

Yet Jesse was there. Loud, deep and sonorous snores from the bed told the detective that.

Old King Brady struck a match, but the gas would not light.

"Wake up! Wake up!" he shouted, giving Jesse a shake. Then springing to the door he flung it open and leaped out into the hall only to jump back as quickly.

Smoke and flames filled the corridor, coming up from the floor below. Nothing of the policeman could be seen.

Jesse was standing in the middle of the floor coughing when Old King Brady got the door shut.

"What's the matter, Brady?" he gasped.

"The house is on fire."

"The deuce! You ain't going to leave me here to roast."

"Of course not, but I may have to roast myself. I've not the faintest idea what we are going to do."

By this time the room had grown lighter; illuminated by the dull lurid light which now shone in through the window, toward which Old King Brady sprang.

Jessie was alongside of him when he threw up the sash, and both peered down.

"Gosh all snakes! our hash is settled!" groaned the outlaw.

It really looked so.

The window opened into an interior court, with a sheer descent of some sixty feet, and no fire-escape to be seen.

"This is the end of the chapter," groaned Jesse again. "By time! Brady, I wish you'd put a pill into me with that shooter of yours. S'pcse I've gotter die some time or 'nother, but I be blamed ef I wanter die like this."

"Nor shall you if I can help it," replied the detective in his usual quiet way. "Something tells me that neither of us are going to die to-night, Jesse James."

This might be true, but to quote Jesse's reply, the chance looked "almighty slim."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHASE DOWN THE CHARLES BEGUN.

THAT the astonishment of Charlie Terrill and Jim Lucas, when they saw their car lying under the trestle bridge at Waltham was great, may well be believed.

How came it there?

Information on this point could be gained from the station master, of course, but the boys never even thought of trying to get it.

This then was the accident the men had been talking about.

It concerned them far more deeply than they had supposed.

"What shall we do?" exclaimed Charlie.

"The first thing of all is to be sure it's our car," replied Jim. "That can only be proved by going down the bank."

But it was necessary to cross the bridge first, for the car lay nearest the opposite bank of the river.

The bridge was without a foot path, and walking over the slippery sleepers proved a ticklish job. They crossed it in safety, however, finding the cause of the disaster on the way in the shape of a broken rail.

Not a soul was in sight. The snow was falling less thickly now. In the western horizon a few stars were peeping out.

"Look out!" said Charlie, as they began looking for a favorable chance to descend the bank, "the James Boys may be there."

"Maybe we'd better go back for help."

"Just as you say. I don't see anything of them. I'd like almighty well to be sure it's our car before I say a word to any one."

"Will they believe you when you tell 'em?"

"Wen't they have to when they see my papers?"

"Didn't think of that. Hark!"

"What is it?"

"Thought I heard some one talking down there."

"I can't hear any one," replied Charlie, listening.

Wallowing through a drift nearly up to their necks they at length reached the overturned car.

It lay on its side partly on the bank, partly in the water; here the river was not frozen, for it runs swiftly below the factory dam.

"Don't seem to be any one here," said Jim.

"The door's locked, too."

"It's the car, though."

"Sure."

"Where do you suppose the James Boys are?"

"Inside, and dead for all I know."

"No, they ain't!" cried Charlie, suddenly.

"Look, Jim, look! That's my padlock, that I bought in Chicago. I had it hanging to the chain on the inside of this door."

"Sure's you're boru. I remember it well."

"Jim, that lock has been put on that door since the car fell off the bridge."

"Looks mighty like it."

"I wonder what it can mean?" mused Charlie.

He came to the conclusion that the best thing he could do was to inform the station master of the true state of the case at once.

"I'll go up if you wish," said Jim. "It's a big bother to get across the bridge."

"No, we won't separate," replied Charlie.

"We'll go back together if we can ever get up the bank again. Hush! Here's some one coming now."

It sounded like a boat—very much so. It seemed to be just round in the other end of the overturned car, where a little boat-house projected out into the stream.

But it only continued for a moment. After that all was still.

"Say, Jim, there's some one been trampling the snow about here," whispered Charlie. "We didn't make all those marks. I think the James Boys must have been here, and the sooner we light out the better. They'll be pretty apt to get the boxes out before morning, and we want to block their game if we can."

"How you going to do it?"

"I'll see the station-master and consult him. If he won't act I'll hunt up the sheriff or whatever the boss policeman of this town is called."

"I'll stay around here and keep me eye peeled if you want me to, Charlie."

"I wish you would, but I hate to ask you to stay alone."

"I'll do it without asking, then. First off, though, let's see what that noise meant, and if there's any boat coming."

They went round behind the boat-house and looked, but they couldn't see any sign of a boat; still the trees and bushes below the boat-house were pretty thick.

"Ain't you afraid to stay?" asked Charlie.

"No, no, go quick. It won't take you long. I can look out for myself."

But it did take Charlie longer than they had thought.

When he got over to the station, he found, to his disgust, that it was closed, and the agent had gone home.

He looked about for some one to speak to, but couldn't find any one who seemed to have brains enough to comprehend him, until he reached the freight sheds further up the track.

Here he was confronted by a big bull-dog, who began barking furiously.

"Get along out of that! Get out, or I'll set the dog on you!" cried a voice, as the door opened, and a head was thrust out.

"Call him back, will you? I want to see some of the railroad people!" answered Charlie.

"Well, I'm a railroad man—get back there, Pete! What do you want?"

"I've got a car down in the river below the bridge. I——"

"Can't do anything about that car to-night," interrupted the fellow, snappishly.

"But you must. Its contents are very valuable. I'm going to see the sheriff for——"

"Go to blazes!" roared the man. "Do you talk about getting the sheriff to make me do my duty, you blame idiot? I've a good mind to set the dog on you anyhow. Get the sheriff, eh? Well, you just try it. You won't hev' to go far, nuther. He lives right over in that house. You just go and be blamed."

Whereupon the dog, who kept up an incessant barking, was kicked back and the door slammed in Charlie's face.

"The stupid fool!" muttered the boy. "Anyhow, he told me where the sheriff can be found. I'll tackle him, I guess."

He hurried over to the house across the track, toward which the man had pointed, and rang the bell.

Here he managed better. It so happened that the occupant of the house was not the sheriff at all, but only a deputy, the actual sheriff of the county living in another town.

Charlie hit the nail square on the head by addressing the man as sheriff when, after a long time, he answered the ring.

"This must be looked into," he said pompously, after Charlie's story had been told. "You did quite right to come to me, young man. James Boys, eh? That's all bosh. They're probably a lot of tramps who just took the name of the James Boys to scare you. Wait a minute and I'll be with you. They'll not be very likely to resist me."

"He's nothing but a big bag of wind, I'm afraid," sighed Charlie as the pompous deputy pulled on a pair of boots and lit a lantern.

"Have you got a revolver?" asked Charlie.

"No, no need."

"You'll carry one if you take my advice. You can say what you like, those were the James Boys. When they shoot they shoot to kill."

"Pooh! Pooh!" puffed the deputy.

"Suit yourself. I warn you."

"Don't you try to tell me my business, young man. Just follow me. Your papers seem straight, and I'm disposed to help you. Don't distress yourself about me."

He was ready to start by this time and they hurried on.

When they reached the trestle bridge, Charlie very naturally stopped to look over.

There was the car just as he had left it. All was still. He could not see a soul.

They hastened on, and descended the bank.

Still no one was visible. Not even Jim. Charlie hurried on to the car.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed in dismay.

"What's the matter?" demanded the deputy.

There was matter enough.

The door of the freight car was open, and Charlie climbing up was peering in.

It was his car fast enough.

There was the little stove lying on its side; there was his chair overturned, and the picture cards he had nailed against the sides of the car.

But the gold was not there, neither was Jim Lucas.

Every box had been removed from the car; there was not a sign to be seen of Jim.

"Young man," exclaimed the deputy, "you've been making a fool of me."

"No, no! They've been here—they've got the gold!" cried Charlie, wild with despair.

"Impossible! How could they carry it?"

"Don't ask me. They've found some way, for——"

"By thunder! I see now!" burst out the deputy. "They've broken open my boat house, they have, and stolen my steam launch, and gone down the river!"

"Evidently."

"We must follow them."

"We can't to-night."

"But we must. See, there is a row-boat here. We can take that. By George, that's mine, too."

The boat had been pulled up on the snow since Charlie's previous visit to the spot.

"I know a better plan than that," cried the sheriff. "They can't get far in the launch. Not further than the bleachery, and that's less than two miles. Come on."

He hurried Charlie back to the house and proceeded with all possible haste to harness his horse into a sleigh.

This time he took his revolvers.

In a few minutes they were spinning over the road which runs parallel to the river Charles.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD KING BRADY BALKED.

"WE'VE got just one chance for escape, Jesse James," said Old King Brady, as he peered out the window of the burning hotel for the second time.

"I can't see that we've got any," replied Jesse despairingly.

"Yes, we have."

"What is it?"

Old King Brady pointed to a rope which hung against the wall.

"That thing is intended for the fire-escape," he said.

"By Judas! you're right!" cried Jesse. "Here are the hooks on the window-sill to fasten it to, but how am I to go down here handcuffed as I am?"

"I'm not a brute," replied Old King Brady, quietly. "I'm going to unhandcuff you, my friend, and give you a chance for your life."

He seized the rope and shook it out of the coil.

There was a sort of stirrup at one end, while the other passed through a pulley.

It was a ridiculous sort of an affair altogether, but Old King Brady after a moment comprehended the way it was intended to work, and explained to Jesse what was to be done.

"I shall take off the handcuffs and go down first," he said. "If I could trust you to wait for me I'd let you go first, but I can't."

"No, I don't think you'd better," replied Jesse, with a grin.

"Strange," muttered the detective, "that there's no one else trying the same scheme. The rooms on this side of the house must be all vacant. We'll take one more look through the door. There may be a better plan."

But he was glad to shut the door the instant he opened it, for the flames coming up over the stairs were furious. Inside the room the smoke

had become so thick that they could scarcely breathe.

"There's nothing for it but to try the rope," said the detective. "Beware how you try treachery, my friend."

He unlocked Jesse's handcuffs and thrust them into his own pocket.

Attaching the rope to the hooks he managed to get his feet in the stirrup, clutched the guide-rope, and went down with a rush.

"Come on, it's not so bad!" he shouted to Jesse, who was peering out of the window, when he reached the pavement of the courtyard below.

He pulled up the stirrup, the contrivance working easily enough.

In a few moments Jesse stood by his side.

"Are you going to handcuff me again?" he asked, sullenly.

"If I could trust you, I wouldn't, until we are safe. We are anything but that here."

"You can trust me, then. I mean I won't try to bolt."

"Come on. We'll see what we can do," replied the detective.

He seized Jesse by the arm, and hurried him across the inclosure, which was surrounded by the walls of the hotel on all sides.

The question now arose how they were to get out.

There was no one in the court, and of the several doors which opened into it, Old King Brady was unable to find one unlocked until they had nearly completed the circuit of the yard, when a low door was discovered standing open. Apparently it led down into the basement of the hotel. It was too dark inside to see anything.

"We'll try this way," said Old King Brady. "Come on."

The words were scarcely uttered, when Jesse turned upon him so suddenly that for once the old detective was taken off his guard.

Seizing him by the throat Jesse dragged him through the opening and slammed the door behind them.

By this time Old King Brady had in part recovered the advantage, and a fierce struggle began in the dark.

It was short, sharp and decisive.

During its progress not a word was spoken.

Suddenly Old King Brady was flung to the floor with a force which completely stunned him.

The next he knew he was still lying down and all was still about him, although a tremendous racket could be heard at a little distance away.

He tried to rise, but to his disgust found that it was no easy matter, for he was handcuffed. Jesse had turned the tables on him completely, it seemed.

In a moment he was up, however, and hurried forward through the darkness.

"The treacherous dog!" he muttered. "This is the way he repays my consideration for him. But for the stupidity of the police here I'd have had that man where the law could hold him now."

He tried to feel for his match-safe, but it was no use, he could not get at his pockets.

Where he was going it was impossible to tell in the darkness, but he kept on boldly, feeling that he could always turn back and retreat to the courtyard if there was no other way.

Had Jesse done this?

It was hard to tell.

"I must have lost consciousness completely," thought the detective. "It was a hard blow. Good gracious, how my head does ache."

Presently he went stumbling against some obstacle which upon close examination proved to be the beginning of a flight of stairs.

This was encouraging.

Old King Brady began to ascend, and as he

advanced the confusing sounds became less distinctly audible. Evidently he was going away from the fire, and was penetrating to another part of the hotel.

"This is disgusting—simply disgusting," he muttered. "Well, it serves me right for trusting that scoundrel. The fire must be under control, though, or there'd be more excitement than there is."

He pushed on, gaining a landing at last, where he paused for breath.

As he stood there, leaning against the wall, he heard a voice close alongside of him say:

"Come, let's have another bottle, Bill. The fire's about out now and there ain't a particle of danger. Let's finish the night where we are. Here's success to our schemes. May we euchre Stitt and capture the car of gold."

The car of gold!

Those were the words.

It need hardly be said that Old King Brady had grown interested now.

Evidently the voice proceeded from behind a partition—a door probably—but how to determine was more than the detective could tell.

Handcuffed as he was, he could do nothing toward getting light on the subject, though he had a whole case of matches in his pocket and a dark lantern beside.

"I can only listen," he thought, "and by the everlasting powers, I know who I am listening to. It's my present employer, Mr. Horsly, and he thinks Stitt's alive."

Remaining perfectly motionless, Old King Brady continued to listen to the voice.

"You are sure Stitt's gone back on you?" said another voice.

"He stole all the papers and sloped to Boston," answered Mr. Horsly's voice; "ain't that enough?"

"Strictly speaking, yes, but what does your expression 'all the papers,' imply?"

"Why, this much—we are entirely alone. There's no chance of any one overhearing us?"

"None whatever."

"Sure?"

"Sure's I can be. That door opens into a passage, the passage leads to a coal cellar, the coal cellar is——"

"There, that will do. We'll draw the line at coal cellars. 'Twill be a cold day when I get left. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Full as a goat," was the detective's brief reflection. "I must be quiet. It is a good thing I happened to come here as I did."

"Go on, Horsly. Let's have it," said the second voice. "What's the real nature of these papers you've got?"

"Which I haven't got—Stitt stole them. You forget."

"Put it any way you like, only explain about the papers."

"Well, they are from the private papers of Mr. Strang. I don't know as I care to go into details."

"Then I'll have nothing at all to do with the case. If a man can't trust his lawyer who can he trust?"

"Upon my word I've known a good many men to get pretty badly left from trusting their lawyers."

"Are you going to tell me or not?"

"Oh, yes; I'll tell you. First, there's papers to prove that the Golden Nugget mine don't belong to me and you and Stitt at all, for the controlling interest of the stock is in the hands of another man."

"Great Caesar! Why, man, what do you mean? Didn't you tell me when I invested that you held the controlling interest? Didn't you——"

"Hold on! Hold on! Don't get excited. Yes, I told you that, but it was a lie."

"And you admit it?"

"Why should I not? There are no witnesses? My word's as good as yours in court of law. The case is just here, Belden; the mine was looked upon as worthless for a long time. I started it as you know, and when it petered out I worked the bulk of the stock off on some one else."

"On who?"

"No matter about names. The fellow was ruined by the transaction, but I got out whole."

"Sharp, ain't you?"

"Well, I guess so. Sharp clear through. When Strang made the strike I had him conceal it until I could buy the stock back."

"And you have done that?"

"Not yet. I tried to find the party, but I've not been able to do so. Meanwhile the gold began accumulating until it was unsafe to keep it on hand any longer. Then we determined to ship it East, and to make matters more secure, it was sent in a private car by way of Boston. All I wanted was to once get my clutches on it, and I thought everything was working fine when Strang up and dies. Then Stitt steals his papers and comes East. Of course I had to let Stitt in, for the papers tell the whole story about the stock, and it would be a bad job for me if they happened to fall into the hands of the police."

"Well, now, I should say so. Stitt brought them to your office and showed them to you?"

"Yes, and I got them away from him."

"Then he stole them from you, if you can call it stealing?"

"That's it. He received a telegram from some one in Leadville which scared him. This was after I had put the business into the hands of Old King Brady——"

"A foolish move that."

"I don't agree with you. If it wasn't for Stitt, I wouldn't change it now. The only thing is, I'm afraid that he'll get at the detective ahead of me and make trouble. Old King Brady, though, is faithfulness itself. He'll get that gold, and he'll hold on to it. Unless he has some reason to suspect that all is not as it should be, he'll deliver it at my store according to agreement. There are two things to be done. First, we must find Stitt and bring him to reason. Next, we must find the man who owns the mine, and buy him out."

"Do you think he is in Boston?"

"Don't know where the mischief he is. He left New York fifteen years ago and hasn't been heard of since. But no matter about him. I shall find him in time, and meanwhile I shan't even breathe his name. Still it's the man we want now, and we must find him. Strange I can get no trace of him. He must be in Boston, though."

"How did he come over?" asked Belden's voice, after a minute.

"By the train, I suppose."

"How do you know he didn't come on the Stonington Line. There was a collision on the Sound last night, and——"

"By George, I never thought of it! It may be so. If he were drowned and the papers gone with him no power on earth could drive me from my position, for the transfer book of the company was destroyed by Strang, and all I've got to do is to claim the entire block of stock as my own."

"And mine," added Belden coolly. "You don't want to forget me."

"You shall be remembered."

"You'd better see that I am or there'll be trouble. Now I tell you what, let's go down to the Providence depot and inquire about Stitt. As for the car of gold, that can't get down before to-morrow night, so we've abundance of time to decide what to do."

This was the last that was heard. After that they rose, and Old King Brady judged from the

the sounds passed through a door into some other part of the hotel.

"Wonderful," he muttered. "It does seem as though I had been brought into this place for a definite purpose. This then is the conspiracy. Very good. I think I hold the key to the situation. Let them look for Stitt till they are gray headed. Now to get out of this place."

And get out he did.

Leave Old King Brady alone to get out of the worst fix that man can devise.

After some further wanderings he managed to reach the office, and explained the situation to the clerk.

This took time, but Old King Brady had his shield and papers enough to prove his identity. Moreover, he had the key of the handcuffs in his pocket, for Jesse had neglected to take it. Thus the handcuffs were unlocked, and the detective set free.

The fire had been a damaging one, but it was confined to one wing of the hotel.

Now that all danger was over, Old King Brady started for the Tippins House with the policeman who had been left on guard in the hall, and who had fled at the first alarm.

First, though, he examined the register of the hotel, finding the name of Horsly upon it as he had expected.

It was more satisfaction than he got at the Tippin House.

Jesse James had been there before him, and had carried Frank off in a hack.

Where had they gone?

It took time to find out, but even this the detective managed to accomplish. By tracing up the hack he found that the brothers had taken the early morning express for Fitchburg, a large town in the interior of Massachusetts, through which the car of gold would have to pass.

Disguising himself so as to avoid any possibility of recognition by Mr. Horsly, Old King Brady went to Fitchburg only to experience another disappointment.

No trace of the outlaws could be discovered. It was impossible to say whether they had been there or not.

Nor was this all.

Upon inquiring of the freight superintendent at Fitchburg it was discovered that the car of gold had made better time than had been expected.

"Just such a car as you describe went down on the last freight," said the superintendent.

An expression of disgust from the detective was followed by an inquiry as to the time of departure of the next passenger train.

"Half an hour," said the superintendent.

"Shall we pass the freight?"

"Yes; somewhere's near the Brick Yards station."

"Does the train stop at the Brick Yards?"

"It does not."

"That is below the chemistry?"

"The chemistry is on the Watertown branch, first station beyond Waltham."

"The train stops at Waltham?"

"Yes."

Such was the conversation.

It resulted in Old King Brady taking the train and getting out at Waltham.

He was the man in the ulster coat.

CHAPTER X.

A WHITE ELEPHANT.

SCARCELY had the form of Charlie Terrill disappeared over the trestle bridge, when Jim Lucas found that he had made a big mistake in remaining to guard the car of gold alone.

Three men, suddenly springing out from behind the little boat-house, were upon him before

he knew it, and had tumbled him over in the snow.

"Dogon it all. You might jest as well taken 'tother," growled one, whose face was particularly long and solemn. "Now you've let him get away we'll have the whole country roused against us, I say."

"Oh, yer always growling, Frank," replied one of the others, a big bearded man. "We didn't see them until the other had got on top of the bridge. Did you want me to shoot and bring all Kingdom Come down on us, say?"

"'Twould have been better."

"Bosh! Your attack of the D. T.'s has turned your head an' made you crankyer nor ever. I'll hev to send fer Old King Brady to doctor you again."

"Old King Brady or not, Jess, he did me a heap of good. I went right to sleep after takin' those pills, and never woke up again till I felt you a-shakin' me. Hain't seen a snake sence."

"It's all imagination anyhow. Hey, there, Clel, can't you get her out?"

"You bet," replied the third man, who had remained inside the boat-house. "I can get up steam in no time, too. Everything's ready—coal kindling, and even water in the b'iler. All we've got to do is to haul her to clear water, load on them boxes, and run right down the river to Boston."

"That's the talk," replied Jesse. "You see, what we thought was misfortune proves to be luck. You was for stickin' to the car when they told us it had got to be left round here, on the branch road. 'No,' says I, 'ef we do that, they'll be sure to think there's something out of geer,' says I. 'Le's make out we're goin' to a hotel, and then sneak 'round and watch our chance to snake out the gold.' You must own that I was right."

"Well, I should smile," growled Frank. "Ef we hadn't a-left the car we should have all been dead ducks now."

All this Jim heard with feelings of dismay.

"Get up, young feller," said Jesse, turning suddenly upon him.

He seized Jim's hand and pulled him to his feet.

"Are you the Terrill boy?" he asked, peering into his face.

"Can't you see he ain't?" sneered Frank. "He's the other one. What's your name?"

"Jim Lucas."

"Kerrect. Well, we're the James Boys. We are going to take them boxes to Boston and you shall help. Ef you keep a still tongue and behave yourself we won't hurt you."

"I'll do whatever you say, gentlemen," said Jim, fearing for his life.

"Ef yer don't it's good-bye John with you. Come, Clel, we're all ready. We'll leave this row-boat what we stole up above and came under the bridge in. We shan't want it now we've got the launch."

"Gotter get the launch out fust," said Clel. "Here, all hands take hold and we'll drag her over the snow to deep water. I can be getting up steam while you fellers is pilln' on the boxes."

"How long 'll it take you? That boy may be back any time with help."

"Only a few minutes."

"Be as lively as blazes then. Here goes."

All lent a hand, and the launch was soon pulled out.

Jesse then produced a key and proceeded to open the car door. Climbing in, he began passing the boxes out to Jim, who in turn handed them to Frank.

It was very hard for poor Jim, but what could he do?

The brothers he knew to be walking arsenals—in fact Jesse had proved as much to him by

flourishing his weapons. It would have been simple madness to attempt resistance them.

Box after box was handed out and loaded on the launch.

Meanwhile Clel was busy with the engine.

By the time the last box was on board he announced that they were ready to start.

"Jump in!" said Jesse, pushing Jim forward at the point of his revolver.

There was no help for it.

In a moment they were all in the boat, and Clel Miller pulled the lever.

"Off she goes!" said Frank. "This is what I call downright good luck. There ain't nothin' to hinder one sailin' straight into Boston, I guess."

Jim chuckled inwardly.

Familiar with the country, the boy knew they were deceiving themselves.

"They can only get as far as the falls at the bleachery," he thought. "If Charlie had only stayed! What in the world am I to do?"

It was quite useless to ask himself, for he could not tell.

"This is the talk," said Jesse as they went shooting along. "Do you know anything about this country, bub?"

"Yes," replied Jim quietly.

"Do you know of any reason why we shouldn't go straight to the city?"

"This river runs to the city, but you can't go straight."

"Why not?"

"Because it don't run straight; it goes wind-ing all about."

"Don't be too fresh, youngster!"

"You asked me the question—I've told you the truth."

"What river is this?"

"The Charles."

"What is your name?"

"Jim."

"Jim what?"

"Jim Lucas. I told you before."

"Dry up! You'll tell me as many times as I ask you. What you doing in the car, anyhow? Didn't I see you back in Kansas when we went for it thar?"

"Like enough you did. I was there."

"Answer my questions, or I'll make you chew glue!"

"What is your question? What do you want me to say?"

"Want to know what you were doing in the car. You didn't start from Leadville in it."

"Didn't I?"

"Answer me straight!" cried Jesse, catching him by the throat, when Frank interfered.

"Oh, let the boy alone, Jesse," he said. "I've sized him up long ago. He's a tramp, I tell you. Ain't that so, bub?"

"About so."

"You're dodging the issue. Is there anything to hinder our running this here launch to Boston?"

"Yes."

"What is it? Speak up. It's like pullin' teeth to get anything out of you."

"Falls."

"I told you so," said Frank, despairingly. "Jess, we're dished!"

"Now ef that ain't consummate gall!" cried Jesse. "You never told me anything of the sort, and ef you had 'twould hev been only guess work. You don't know no more'n I know 'bout this place."

"Oh, you dry up!" snapped Frank. "Where are those falls, bub?"

"Other side of that bridge," said Jim, pointing toward a large brick factory which could be seen rising ahead of them. "That's the bleach-

ery; there's falls there, and there's more lower down when you get to Watertown."

"Dam?" said Frank.

"Don't swear, it'll bring us bad luck," sneered Jesse.

"Who's a-swearin'? I only axed the boy if it was a dam what made the falls."

"Course it's a dam. Boys, we've got a white elephant on our hands. We can't go no further, and this young chipmunk's a-laughing at us. He know'd it all along."

"Shoot him and chuck him overboard," growled Clel Miller, quite as angry as his friends.

"Now look here," said Frank, "we've had enough of this nonsense. D. T's or no D. T's I begin to think I'm the most level headed of the lot. We understand the situation--what's to be did?"

"You can't go any furth r, gentlemen, and there's no use thinking about it," spoke up Jim, seeing that the best plan was to make himself agreeable. "Even if you could carry the launch around the falls, which you can't, you'd have to do the same thing again two or three times. Beside there's a long piece further down where the channel is deep and narrow. That's frozen over most likely; it most always is."

"That's business!" cried Frank. "We've got to face the music. Now look here, Jess, it's stopped snowing and is going to turn off cold. What we want's a horse and sleigh."

"Might's well wish for the moon. Where are we going to get one?"

"Ask the boy."

"Blest if I know unless you steal it," replied Jim.

"The very thing," said Jesse; "that's what we'll do. You'd better stop her, Clel, stop here by that cross-road what seems to lead up to the main street. You and the boy can stay by the boat, while me and Frank go on the recon-noitre."

Clel drove the boat to the foot of a private road leading down through some gentleman's grounds under the concealment of a thick clump of bushes and there stopped.

Jesse and Frank now leaped out and struck off toward the barn, keeping a sharp lookout for dogs.

"It's a ticklish business, Frank," whispered the bandit king, "a very ticklish business. People hain't like what they are in Missouri in this dogoned old beanery of a State. Thar they hev some respect for a feller's bravery even ef they don't take so kindly to being relieved of their pocket books. Here they'd string us up quicker than scat ef they caught us, you bet."

"Oh, quit talkin' and tell us what to do, can't yer?"

"Well, I'm a-thinkin'. I don't dare to try my luck in that barn. It's too near the house."

"Let's make for the main road then."

They did so, soon finding themselves standing in a little square where there was a store and a few large wooden houses. There was a horse attached to a box sleigh standing hitched to a post in front of the store, at the sight of which Jesse chuckled in deep satisfaction. "Why it's the very thing," he said.

There was no one in sight.

For several minutes the brothers stood looking about in this direction and that. Positively no one could be seen.

They stole toward the sleigh, jumped in, and turned the horse.

When they got to the gentleman's grounds, Frank leaped out and opened the gate, Jesse driving through and stopping only when the bank of the river was reached. They were close beside the launch now.

"Hello, Clel!" called Jesse.

"What's wanted?" answered Clel Miller's hoarse voice, as he thrust his head out from among the bushes.

"Look!"

"A pung, by gracious!"

"On with them boxes, boy," breathed Jesse. "Lively, now, before the owner of this rig comes roarin' round like a Texas bull on ther rampage."

They went to work with a will, and in a short time had the last box loaded on the sleigh without anything having occurred to disturb them.

"Good job," said Jesse. "Now all we've got to do is to drive to Boston, and unload. Won't prove such a white elephant after all. I've got the address of a sheeny pawnbroker what'll help us out if we can only manage to reach his place."

"Shall we take the boy, or leave him?" asked Frank.

"Take him," said Jesse; "he knows too much already. We'll have to shoot him, and drop him by the road somewheres," he added in an undertone.

"Jump in!" he called aloud, "and don't be all night erbout it nuther."

Tim obeyed, and they started forthwith.

"Lay low when we turn into the main road," whispered Frank—Jesse was driving.

"Leave your uncle alone fur that. By time!" he breathed, as they turned through the gate, "thar comes another rig!"

"Drive right ahead an' they won't notice us most likely," suggested Frank in a whisper.

He was totally mistaken. The other sleigh was coming from the direction of Waltham. There was a man and a boy in it. They were coming very fast, and by the time Jesse got his horse fairly through the gate, were right alongside.

"There they are! There they are!" Jim heard Charlie's familiar voice shout. "There's the James Boys!"

"Discovered!" breathed Jesse, lashing the horse.

"I order you to halt in the name of the law!" roared the man in the other sleigh.

Crack! Crack!

Crack! Crack!

Two shots—then two more.

"Great God, I'm shot!" yelled the man in the pursuing sleigh, and to Jim's horror he saw him pitch forward and fall headlong into the snow.

"Charlie! Charlie! I am innocent! It's not my work!" shouted the poor fellow, giving expression to the fear that was uppermost in his mind.

"Drive a knife through his ribs ef he does that again!" hissed Jesse, lashing the horse to his utmost speed.

They scarcely turned the corner by the square when a tall man sprang out and attempted to seize the reins.

"Halt!" he cried.

"Old King Brady's voice, by gum!" burst out Jesse.

Crack! Crack!

Crack! Crack!

A perfect fusillade of shots woke the echoes.

The tall man let go his hold upon the bridle and fell back into the snow.

And the sleigh of the James Boys sped on.

CHAPTER XI.

BAFFLED AGAIN.

"ARE you hurt, sir?" asked the boy, bending down over the tall man who lay in the snow.

The boy was none other than our young friend, Charlie Terrill.

That the tall man was Old King Brady goes without saying, as a matter of course.

"No, no, not much. I was hit in the breast, but, thank God, the ball must have struck n thir-

case I carry in my coat pocket. It knocked the wind out of me, that's all."

It had all been the work of a minute.

Out of one of the houses two men had rushed hurriedly. Another came running up from the opposite direction. While the first two went to the assistance of the wounded deputy, Charlie, who had leaped out and stopped the horse, instinctively pushed on to where Old King Brady lay.

As the detective rose still a third man came running up.

By this time the sleigh driven by the James Boys had turned a corner and was out of sight.

"You see," cried the detective, seizing the latest comer by the arm, "those are the fellows. We made a mistake in leaving our rig and crossing the bridge to reconnoiter as we did. I must have another sleigh at once."

"Well, I don't know how you are going to get it about here, then," replied the man.

"Take mine!" spoke the deputy, who was being led toward one of the houses, supported by the other two men.

Old King Brady needed no second invitation. He leaped to the sleigh and jumped in at once.

"You don't seem to be much hurt?" said the man to whom he had spoken.

"I ain't."

"Did you shoot one of them?"

"Don't know. Going with me?"

"I wish I could, but it's impossible."

"I'm going—I must go!" burst forth Charlie.

Without waiting to be asked he jumped into the sleigh.

"Hold on! Who are you?" demanded Old King Brady.

"I must go—I must indeed!" repeated Charlie, positively. "Those fellows are the notorious Missouri outlaws—the James Boys. They've robbed a car which was in my charge."

"Ha!" whispered the detective, "then you're the boy who came East in charge of the car of gold?"

"I am."

"Your name?"

"Charlie Terrill."

"You shall go with me, Charlie Terrill. Good-night, friends."

Crack! went the whip, and the sleigh flew down the road, rounded the corner and disappeared.

Jesse had about six minutes start, and he needed all he had.

"Anybody hit?" he asked, as they dashed away.

"He's killed the boy, I think," said Frank, against whose shoulder poor Jim was lying heavily with a face as white as death.

"Are you hurt, bub?" asked Frank, kindly.

No answer.

"Chuck him in the road and let him die," said Clel Miller, in an unfeeling tone.

"Don't yer do it," said Jesse; "if he dies here it's all right, an' we haven't got no time to fool with him, but ef we was to chuck him out it might bring bad luck."

"I'll put him down in the straw alongside the boxes," said Frank; "anyhow we couldn't do nothing for him. Ho's got to take his chance."

On rushed the sleigh and for several moments neither of the brothers spoke.

"It's no use. Jess, we can't get clear this way," said Frank, at last. "Don't you hear them bells a-comin' behind us? It's Old King Brady, sure."

"How can it be Old King Brady when I shot him?"

"You know, blame well how much that amounts to. The man has got as many lives as a cat."

"But we've got to do something, whether it's Brady or not," said Clel Miller. "We're being tracked, and with this load thero aln't no hope of escaping on a straight run."

"Hold on, boys, I see what to do," cried Jesse suddenly.

They had come to a road which crossed theirs, over which they could see that a sleigh had recently passed.

"This is our scheme," said Jesse. "It's a big chance, I own, but we've got to take it. We'll turlu in here and go back toward Waltham—t'other way seems to be the road to Boston near's I can make out."

They did it, and none too soon, for they had no more than gained the shelter of a little clump of woods on ahead than Jesse, looking back, could see another sleigh which moved into the right hand road.

"Thar, what'd I tell you?" he said to Frank.

"Who is it—can you see?" asked Frank.

"There's two of 'em in there anyhow. One's Brady, I'm cock sure."

"Thar's no use in trying to kill that man," growled Frank, as they drove on.

He was right. It was Old King Brady.

Who can blame him for the blunder?

Not twenty minutes before a heavily laden sleigh had gone over that road.

It was the road to the city, too, and he had every reason for assuming that the James Boys had chosen it. Beside, there were the tracks.

The fact that he was listening to Charlie's story at the time had nothing to do with the mistake, although the detective felt inclined to blame himself afterward for not paying stricter attention to what he was about.

Now we know all that Charlie Terrill had to tell, so we need not go over that ground again. Instead, let us relate how Old King Brady chanced to happen so opportunely upon the scene.

A few words will tell it. Instead of taking the course chosen by Charlie Terrill and Jim Lucas upon reaching the Waltham station, Old King Brady made a bee line for the station master, a dull, stupid old fellow, who only half understood, and sent the detective on a wild goose chase up to the freight house where another B. & O. car stood on a side track.

When he discovered his mistake and returned to the depot, the station agent had locked up and gone home.

It was not until Old King Brady followed him to his house that he succeeded in his purpose.

Then he heard the story of the overturned car, and learning that it was a B. & O., at once saw that in all probability it was the car of gold.

Back to the Chemistry was the next move in the station agent's box sleigh, a clumsy affair used for carting light freight about town. As the agent lived on the south side of the river, they approached the scene of the wreck by a different road entirely from that taken by Charlie Terrill and the deputy sheriff.

The car was found empty.

The story of the three men was told, and then Old King Brady began to comprehend the case.

"By gracious! they have baffled me again," he reflected. "They must have killed that unfortunate young fellow somewhere further up the road and pitched his body out of the car. There's no doubt that they've been here, taken the gold and loaded it into the steam launch, just as this man says."

It was the station agent who said it. He saw through the situation at a glance, and told the same story about the falls at the Bleachery that the deputy sheriff gave Charlie a little later on.

The result was that Old King Brady was first at the Bleachery, but in spite of this not in time

to frustrate the schemes of the James Boys, as we have seen.

Something of this the detective told to Charlie Terril as they rode along.

"Evidently those men have followed you all the way from Leadville," he said. "They are desperate fellows. You have had a very narrow escape."

"But we shall catch them," answered Charlie. "We must catch them. I should never dare to face Mr. Strang again if after getting within ten miles of Boston I lost the gold."

"You'll never have to face him again."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Mr. Strang is dead. More than that I mean that he was a consummate rascal when living. You only understand a part of this business, young man."

"It makes no difference whether he's dead or alive. I promised to deliver that gold in Boston, and I propose to do it if it takes a leg!" cried Charlie. "So he's dead. Well, well, that accounts for my not hearing from him. Dear me, this is a pretty bad mess."

"I should say it was," replied the detective dryly, "and it's likely to be a worse one before we are through."

He was thinking of Mr. Horsly and the rascally lawyer, Belden. What had become of them?

Before they had gone a mile Old King Brady began to wonder if they were on the right trail after all.

Nothing could be seen of the sleigh, and it certainly seemed as if they ought to overtake it.

Presently the tracks in the snow turned into a barn-yard and beyond lay a stretch of unbroken road.

"Fooled!" breathed Old King Brady.

He leaped out and hurried into the yard. There stood the sleigh which had made the tracks he had been following. It was a clumsy old box on runners, loaded with potatoes in barrels; the horse had been taken out, and there was no one to be seen about the yard.

"How is it?" asked Charlie anxiously, as he returned.

"We've been going wrong. They've evidently given us the slip by taking the other road."

He leaped into the sleigh, and, turning, lashed the horse to his utmost speed.

It was not long before he learned that his surmise was correct.

The outlaws had proceeded a short distance along the Waltham road, and then turning had headed straight for Boston.

Several persons coming from the city had seen such a sleigh running at full speed toward the town.

"I'm afraid they've got the best of us," said the detective, grimly. "They have a good start, and are making the best of it. Things begin to look pretty blue."

Still he kept steadily on.

By and by the houses grew thicker, roads gave way to streets; they were running through the city of Cambridge. Practically this whole region is Boston, but it goes under many different names.

"If we don't overhaul them before we reach the long bridge," said Old King Brady, "our chances of success are mighty slim."

But they had seen nothing whatever of them when they reached the long bridge, and Old King Brady stopped the sleigh to inquire of the man at the draw.

No, he had seen no one answering to the description given. It had been a bad night for travel. Few sleighs but those of the milkmen who were forced out by the very nature of their business had gone along.

"Are you sure?" persisted Old King Brady.

"I am positive," said the man. "I see every one who passes. There can be no mistake."

"Is there any other way of getting into Boston?"

"Oh, yes. You can go by the way of East Cambridge, you know; there is a bridge over there. Many go that way, especially if their business lies in the North End."

"And the North End," murmured Old King Brady, "is the precise locality to which Jesse James will be sure to steer."

He now turned the sleigh and cutting through a cross street, before many minutes he had come in sight of the East Cambridge bridge.

"There they are!" burst out Charlie.

Sure enough!

There was the sleigh standing close to the bridge, which had been turned to let a vessel through and was now turning back. Behind the sleigh were several others with big covered tops to them. These were the milk sleighs. They had been meeting them all along the road.

"It's Jesse and Frank just as sure as fate!" muttered the detective, "and they'll be over that bridge before we can possibly reach them. Oh, if I had only been given another moment. G'lang there! G'lang!"

But the horse was doing his best, and was not to be forced into further efforts.

Before they could reach even the end of the line the sleigh of the James Boys had started across the bridge. Just before it moved Jesse rose up and looked behind him.

He dropped back into his place in an instant, and the detective could see that he was saying something to the bridge-tender as he passed.

"He saw me!" exclaimed Old King Brady.

"Look! look! They are going to turn the bridge again!" cried Charlie. "The man is ordering the other teams to keep back."

"It's a trick! He's bribed the bridge tender!" exclaimed the detective; "but it shall not avail him."

Regardless of the fact that there was a line of sleighs, all waiting their turn, Old King Brady had driven right ahead and was now pretty close to the bridge.

"Look to the sleigh," he said to Charlie.

He leaped off and dashed forward with all his might.

"Keep back! Keep back!" shouted the bridge tender's assistant.

Old King Brady pushed him aside as though he had been a fly, and dashed upon the bridge.

"Get off! We've got to open the bridge again!" shouted the man. "It'll only be a minute to wait."

But Old King Brady paid no attention to him. The sleigh of the James Boys was just leaving the bridge now, and he had an eye for nothing else.

Jesse saw him coming, and standing up, fired.

The ball whistled past the detective and struck the iron-work, drawing an exclamation of terror from the bridge tender.

Deliberately the detective drew his revolver and returned the shot.

"Bang, bang, bang, bang!"

It sounded like a military engagement. Shot after shot was fired, yet no harm appeared to be done, for the sleigh shot on. Though the detective followed, he was soon left far behind.

"I'm left all around," he muttered, as he leaned pantingly against a fence. "I'll wait for the boy to overtake me and try it again."

The words were no more than spoken than a cracking sound was heard, and the fence suddenly gave way behind him.

The next thing Old King Brady knew he was flying downward along with a mass of broken boards.

Truly the detective was being baffled on every hand that night.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT WILL THEY DO WITH IT?

Now that they had got it, what could they do with it?

This was the question which had been perplexing the James Boys ever since they found themselves in possession of the gold.

It was still an open question when Jesse sat down, burning with mingled rage and triumph after that little pistol practice on the East Cambridge bridge.

"Dogon his blasted picter, he's biler plated an' copper fastened!" he muttered. "Frank, thar hain't no killing that man nobow. Gosh all snakes, I've wasted more good bullets on him nor a few. They make no more impression than water on a duck's back."

"He must wear suthin' like one o' them ere mail train suits in under his shirt," suggested Clel Miller, meditatively.

"Mail train suits! What in time be you talking about, Clel?" asked Frank.

"He means chain mail," laughed Jesse. "I was telling him about it the other day, but that's all nonsense. I can't seem ter shoot straight when he's around nobow, an' it's jest the same with him."

"Can you see him now, Jess?" asked Frank.

"No. He's dropped back. Where the dogs do you s'pose he sprung from? I thought we'd given him the slip."

"Dunno. Hope the bridgeman didn't see that boy when you give him the V to turn back the bridge. He might think it strange to see him lyin' thar in the straw."

"The boy! That's so!" cried Jesse. "Why, I'm blest if I've hardly thought of him seuce. He hain't said nothin' neither. Of course he's dead."

"Of course," replied Frank. "I made up my mind to that some time ergo, but 'twasn't safe to stop and look."

"Well, we'd better do it now, then," said Jesse, leaning back and looking over the pile of boxes. "By thunder, fellers!" he called, "the boy ain't thar!"

"Ain't thar!" echoed Frank. "Why he must be thar—of course he's thar. Where else could he be?"

"Don't ask me. He's gone anyhow."

And Jesse was right.

When they came to look behind the boxes, not a trace of Jim Lucas was to be found.

This was very strange; particularly so since they had not stopped by the way even for a moment.

Jesse didn't know what to make of it, and he said so.

"It can't be helped; he's either jumped out, or fell out," growled Frank. "Either way it don't make but blamed little difference to us. The question is more about the gold; we've got it to Boston at last; now what be we going to do next?"

"Take it to the Sheeney's in Worth street," said Jesse.

"Do you think that's the best way?"

"Of course."

"I doubt it."

"There's no other."

"What's the reason there ain't?"

"'Cause thar hain't."

"Wall, I kin suggest a plan."

"What is it?"

"Let's drive right to the depot what you take to go to Missouri, and ship the gold to Kansas City. You know to who."

"Tain't a bad idea," replied Jesse, musingly,

"that is ef the express company would only take it and put it right through."

"I think the best thing we cau do is to hock it, fellers," said Clel, speaking rather thickly.

"Clel, what's the matter with you?" demanded Jesse. "Have you been drinking out thar on the end of ther seat ou thar sly? What rank rub-bish you talk."

"Blamed ef he hasn't," says Frank. "I kin smell his breath."

"Dogon it all! be keerful," said Jesse sternly.

"Rules are jest as binding as though we was still in Missouri. Ef you play any of your blame tricks, Clel Miller, I'll shoot you quicker'n a scat! We've got ter pull together. Next thing we'll hev that man Brady adroppin' onto us from the clouds agin, and we can't tell what that'll mean."

"I haiut drunk, f Jess," stammered Clel. "We've had a powerful cold night's work of it, I want you to understand. I ously took a drop jest to brace me up."

"See 't you don't take no more then," grunted Jess. "Now 'bout this express bizness, Frank."

"I favor it strong," said Frank. "We can ship the boxes jest ez they are, and before any one ketches on can be on our way West."

"Whar's the express office?"

"Down to the Boston and Albany depot's one; thar's another in Court street. You see I thought of this before, but I don't want to urge you, Jess. You were stuck on lettin' the sheeney into the secret, but don't you see thar's a big risk in that?"

"You're right, and a big expense, too. He'll have to have his share."

"Drive to Court street," said Frank. "We'll put on a bold face and let ter go ef she kin go on the morning train."

They accordingly drove the sleigh boldly up to the main office of the Adam's Express Company and stopped.

"Let's both go in, it looks more like bizness," said Jesse. "Clel, d'ye s'pose yer sober enough to look after the nag?"

"Wall, now I guess so. I ain't drunk, Jess. You jest quit a-harrasin' on me."

"See thet you do it then," said Jesse, and followed by Frank, he entered the express office.

The hour was very late—long after midnight. One sleepy-looking clerk was behind the counter, for this, the headquarters of the great business interest known throughout the country as the Adam's Express, is kept open night and day.

The clerk was standing with his back turned, examining the contents of a large open safe, from which he would occasionally select a parcel and toss it into a box which stood beside him on the floor.

"Evenin', neighbor," said Jesse, roughly, but in not an uncivil tone.

Now the night clerk was a typical "Bosting swell," with his hair parted in the middle, his eye-glasses, pimply face, perfect-fitting clothes and lily white digits, encircled by many rings.

He was not the regular night clerk, but only a substitute. Over in a chair in the furthest corner of the room sat a big, burly fellow, evidently intended to do the fighting in case of necessity, fast asleep.

"Evening, neighbor," repeated Jesse, in a louder tone, for no attention was paid to his remark.

"Beg pawdon," drawled the clerk, turning carelessly around and surveying the rough apparel of the brothers with a most contemptuous air.

"Say, Jess, kin you read what's written on them packages on ther top shelf of the safe?"

breathed Frank, in a tone too low for any one but his brother to catch.

"Bet yer sweet life!" was Jesse's almost inaudible reply.

"Diamonds, value \$10,000," was written in plain letters upon each package. There were five of the packages—a tempting bait.

"Kin I ship some boxes by you to Missouri, ter-night?" asked Jesse, quietly.

"Where to?" asked the Bosting young gent, bestowing upon Jesse a supercilious stare.

"To Missouri. Be you deaf?"

"Where to, I asked you? Missouri is a large State."

"You gol darned little bean eater, don't you s'pose I know ther size of Missouri?" roared Jesse. "I've a good mind to jump down your little six-penny throat, and make no bloomin' mistake. You'd find me the toughest dogoned bean you ever tackled. Answer my question, d'ye hear?"

"Where are your boxes?" stammered the clerk, frowning.

Jesse made one spring forward, throwing his body half across the counter; seizing the pretty "Bosting gent" by the collar he rammed a cocked revolver in his face.

"Now, Frank! Quicker'n greased lightning!" he whispered. "Look out for the feller in the chair!"

With one jerk he pulled the clerk over on top of the counter where he lay on his stomach kicking like a crab.

"Don't you dare to squeal!" he hissed, "if you do I'll empty these pill boxes into you. Neighbor, move an inch and you're a dead man!"

The last was addressed to the man in the chair who had jumped up awakened by the racket.

And the man heeded the warning. He never opened his mouth, but simply stood there too much terrified to speak.

Meanwhile Frank had vaulted over the counter, and without an instant's hesitation swept the contents of the top shelf of the safe into his pocket.

"Scooped!" he whispered, as he came flying back again.

"Vamoose!" answered Jesse, and they made one dash for the street.

"Help! Murder! Thieves! Police!" came roaring after them.

"Got 'em all?" breathed Jesse.

"Every blamed one!"

"Ef they are rightly marked it will give us \$50,000 more for this night's work and—great gosh! Whar's the sleigh?"

"Gone, by Judas!" echoed Frank, in dismay.

"Clel has played us false!"

It certainly had that appearance.

The sleigh was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT BECAME OF THE SLEIGH.

THE East Cambridge Bridge was turned almost as soon as Old King Brady stepped off of it, for the bridge-tender had been bribed by Jesse to do it, as we have said.

From the line of milk sleighs on the Cambridge side a prolonged howl of indignation went up. As for Charlie Terrill, he viewed the moving structure with feelings akin to despair.

"He can never catch them alone and on foot," he muttered, alluding to Old King Brady.

But before he had time to think further about the matter he was startled by a voice calling:

"Charlie—oh, Charlie, how glad I am!"

Then he saw a young man with his arm in a sling leap down from one of the milk sleighs alongside and hurry toward him, and saw by the bridge light that it was Jim Lucas, his old companion on the train.

"Jim!" he exclaimed in astonishment.

"Yes, it's me, Charlie!" cried the young man, leaping into the sleigh. "Oh, how glad I am."

"Where on earth did you spring from, Jim? I thought you were in the sleigh with the James Boys."

"So I was, but that didn't hinder me from jumping out of that milk wagon just now. You see I managed to drop out of the sleigh while we were on the road and give them the slip; along came the milkman and picked me up. Say, Charlie, you don't think that it was my fault that they robbed the car?"

"No, no, Jim. I don't think that. You are wounded?"

"Yes, that man shot me at the Bleachery."

"Old King Brady, the detective?"

"Was that the famous Old King Brady? I didn't know."

"Yes."

"Where is he now?"

"Run across the bridge after the James Boys. He's the most determined man you ever saw, but he won't catch them just the same."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Jim. "This is a bad mess."

"Are you much hurt?" asked Charlie.

"No. I've got a bad wound in the arm, that's all. It made me kinder faint at first, and they laid me down in the bottom of the sleigh. They were going to kill me, Charlie—that's why I dropped out first chance I got."

Then as they were forced to wait until the bridge-tender chose to turn his bridge back again, Jim related all that had happened since the moment Charlie left the car.

"I'm afraid we've lost the gold," sighed Charlie. "Those James Boys are desperate fellows. Who would ever have supposed that they would have followed us all the way East after we drove them off that snowy night on the plains? Why didn't they attack us in Missouri? That's what I can't understand."

He would have understood it better could he have known that Frank received a serious wound in that fight which tied him up for several days. By the time he was able to move every chance of attacking the train on their own ground had departed, but by taking the fast express they easily managed to get ahead of it, as we have seen.

In a short time the boys found themselves on the other side of the bridge, Charlie driving over with the rest of the teams.

Now arose the question what had become of Old King Brady.

Nothing of the old detective was to be seen.

"I'm sure I don't know what to do," said Charlie. "We've got to Boston at last, but under what circumstances. Jim, I feel sick."

"Don't say that, Charlie."

"I mean in my mind. It's enough to make any one sick. You, poor fellow, are really sick, though. Hadn't we better go and see a doctor first of all and see about your arm?"

"No, no. I'll do well enough. We ought to do something about that gold."

"What can we do?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"What a tremendous big place this is, Jim. I'm all turned round."

"Well, I ain't then. I know my way about here as well as you do in Leadville."

"Can't you suggest something?"

"I'd rather you'd take your own head, Charlie. I'm willing to help you all I can."

"No, no. You're acquainted, and I ain't. If you were in my place what would you do?"

"I think I'd put up this sleigh in some livery stable and go to police headquarters, tell the whole story, and then look up a room and go to bed."

"And do nothing about flushing the gold?"

"What else can you do? You might as well look for a needle in a hay-stack as look for the James Boys in Boston. Which one of these streets do you think they've taken? Don't you see? Who can tell?"

"That's so."

"Then there's the detective—he may have overhauled them."

"Talu't likely."

"Old King Brady is a smart man, Charlie. Mebbe you don't know much about him, but we all know him here."

"We'll hope he's done it, Jim, but, all the same, I don't believe it. Anyhow, I'm going to take your advice and go to the police. You shall show me the way."

"We'd better get rid of the horse first."

"Shan't we drive to the station?"

"It's only a step after we leave the stable in Ludberry street, where I'm going to take you; the team would only be in the way."

Jim's plan was adopted.

Leaving the horse and sleigh at the stable in Ludberry street, the boys hurried through Tremont Row and turned down Court street.

Just as they were passing the Adams Express building, Charlie caught his friend's arm with an exclamation of intense surprise.

"Jim! Jim! great Scott! there's the sleigh!" he whispered.

"Holy Christopher, Charlie, you're right!"

There in front of the express office stood the sleigh, with the boxes piled upon it. To the amazement of both the boys, there was no one guarding it, not a soul to be seen.

Now the explanation of this phenomena is simple enough—it is quite *spiritual* in its character, too.

Clel Miller had emptied his bottle on the road, and being, as Jesse had suspected, "two-thirds shot," had seized upon the opportunity to slip over to Cornhill, where a light burning in the window of a well-known restaurant suggested the strong probability of his being able to get the bottle filled again.

Charlie Terrill never lost an instant.

With one bound he leaped upon the seat and seized the reins.

"Jump in—jump in—quick!" he whispered.

"You can bet the James Boys ain't far away."

Seized with Charlie's enthusiasm, Jim leaped into the sleigh, and away they went flying down Court street like the wind.

"Where are you going?" asked Jim.

"Anywhere! Hooray! We've got the gold!"

"Hold on! Hold on! If you go on like that a cop'll have us," cried Jim, warningly.

Scarce had the words escaped him than a policeman shot out from the concealment of a doorway and, seizing the horse's bridle, brought him to a halt.

"And phwat hev yez in the boxes?" he asked.

"Come, now, spake up."

"They belong to us," replied Charlie. "Let go of the horse, will you? I'm in a hurry. You've no right to interfere with me!"

"I hair't, eh? We'll blame soon see about that, my leetle rooster. Move over there—I'm gointer get in. We'll investigate this at the station, so we will. It's meself that heerd yer spakin' about gold."

"We'd better tell him the whole business," whispered Jim. "It's the only way."

"Tell the truth and shame the devil," said the policeman. "Spake it right out now. It'll be sure to be a lie."

"Don't you tell me I lie!" cried Charlie hotly.

"Let go! Touch those reins if you dare!"

For the officer was trying to seize the reins now. There would have been a fight in a minute if Jim had not interfered.

"Tain't any use, Charlie," he whispered, "and beside that it ain't the best way. Don't you see how this man can protect us? We can't go drivin' about the streets all night. We'd better tell him the whole thing."

"Come now! Come now! Spake English," growled the policeman. "No Dutch won't do here. What's in the boxes? Spake up or I'll take yez in."

It was noticeable, however, that he did not attempt to take the reins until Charlie of his own accord placed them in his hands.

"Look here, officer," he said. "My friend is right. We've got a valuable load here. There's a hundred thousand dollars in gold in those boxes. We brought it East from Colorado. We were robbed back here on the road by those thieves, and now we've got it back. Drive us to the station, will you. I want to put the gold under the protection of the police until its owners can be notified. Anyhow, I'm sick of it and shall be glad to get it off my hands."

The policeman's mouth opened as wide as a young alligator's.

"A hundred thousand dollars!" he ejaculated.

"Ar—h come off now! Yer givin' me guff."

"It's true."

"An' in gold?"

"Sure's your born. Drive on. The thieves may be following us."

"Yez look like honest lads and upon me sowl yez talk better nor yez look," said the policeman, giving the horse a cut. "It's meself, Jim Mulvany, what'll give ye all the protection in the wuruld. G'long there! Sure it's a lucky thing yez met me, so it is."

They were in State street now, and when they reached Blackstone the policeman turned in.

"Where are you taking us?" asked Jim. "Why don't you go to headquarters? That's where we were bound."

"Is it thin? Sure an' yez wor goin' away from it."

"Well, you ain't going toward it. 'Taint down Blackstone street anyhow."

"No, but me station is over in Charles street. I'm takin' the nearest way."

There was a look in the man's eye that Charlie did not like at all.

"But he can't do less than drive us to the station," he reflected. "Once there we are safe."

And Jim on his side was reasoning just the same way.

On swept the sleigh, Mr. Mulvany questioning and flattering the boys as they advanced.

"Sure, an' it's a big thing ye've been after doin'," he said. "A big thing. I tell ye there ought to be a big reward come in somewhere, if what yez tell me is true."

"Reward for what?"

"For phwat? Phwat does a hundred thousand dollars amount to, onyhow? Nothing—oh, nothing at all."

"But who is to pay the reward?" persisted Charlie. "The man who owns the gold is dead. I can't pay it, for I ain't got any money. I'm only the express man in this business, as it were."

"Why will he persist in telling all he knows, and more too?" thought Jim, whose stormy experience had taught him the virtue of a silent tongue.

Still talking when they ran into Charles street, Mr. Mulvany drove up to Seventh street, and reined in before a gate, which seemed to lead into the yard of a large building—some kind of factory, Charlie thought.

"I want to spake a worrud to a man who is watching here beyant," he said. "Will yez wait two minutes for me? Thin we'll drive to the station straight."

"Certainly," replied Charlie, "a dozen if you wish."

"I won't be gone wan," said the policeman. He jumped down and disappeared through a door alongside the gate.

"What in the world did you tell him all your business for, Charlie?" grumbled Jim, in a dissatisfied way. "You ought to know better; half the cops are frauds. Let's take our chance and drive on."

"Shau't do nothing of the sort," replied Charlie, who didn't feel very pleasant at being reproved. "I like that man. Of course he's rough, but he's a good, honest fellow, for all that. I'm ever so glad we met him, and shall wait for him if it takes half an hour. What difference does it make to us?"

"You'll be apt to find out before we get through if he's the fraud I think he is. I've seen his kind before."

"What do you mean, Jim Lucas?"

"I mean that he flattered and coaxed you into telling him a whole lot of things you'd no business to tell—that's what I mean."

"It ain't no such a thing."

"But it is, though. Do you see where he's gone? That's a notorious dive. It looks dark and homeless enough now, but I remember it well. Why didn't he drive us straight to the station if he is honest, instead of coming this round-about way? I tell you there is a big temptation in those boxes for him."

"It's the pain you're in that makes you suspicious, old fellow. You're away off. I rather like that man for his rough, honest way, and—but here he comes. I told you it was all straight."

"I didn't kape yez long, did I now?" said the policeman, hurrying up and jumping in. "Now we'll go to the station," he added, and he took the reins, but instead of driving on, suddenly turned the horse in toward the gate.

"What are you doing?" cried Charlie, a fear seizing him.

Jim made one grab at the reins, but did not get them.

Whatever else might be said of Mr. Mulvany, his arm was iron, for he brought it round against Jim, forcing him back as though he had been a child.

"None of that!" he hissed. "I'm boss of this job."

At the same instant the gate was suddenly thrown open and the sleigh ran in.

Immediately the gate closed again.

Time passed.

At the end of an hour neither the sleigh nor any of its occupants had made their appearance. Certainly this was not the police station.

There was a sign over the gate, old and time-worn, and scarcely legible.

It read:

"DUSENBURY & STRUTHERS,
"Hides and Fat."

Evidently Mr. Mulvany was partial to fat.

Perhaps he thought he had a fat thing in those ten boxes of gold.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HERMIT OF THE CATTLE PENS.

It was a bad fall that Old King Brady got—a very bad one.

But for the fact that snow covered everything that night it would probably have been his last.

The grade of Seventh street is somewhat higher than the river bank, and the detective, falling with the rotten fence boards, went down with a rush to the level below, striking his head against a post with a force which rendered him entirely unconscious for a time.

But such unpleasant experiences are a part of every detective's life, and Old King Brady had

long since become well used to them. It took a pretty hard knock to discourage him.

How long the unconscious fit lasted is doubtful, but probably it was for no great length of time.

The first Old King Brady knew a man was bending over him, and when he opened his eyes and looked up it seemed to him that never in his life had he looked upon so singular a being before.

He was a person of medium height, old, dirty and disgusting, covered with an old stable blanket, drawn over a coat made up of patches of cloth of many colors; big clumsy shoes enclosed his feet, and an old tattered fur cap his head.

Briefly, he was the worst-looking tramp the detective had ever seen.

"Hello! Who are you?" asked Old King Brady, starting up.

"Mose," replied the man, the word being spoken with a quick jerk.

"Wha—what's the matter? I must have fallen—yes. I remember the fence gave way. How long have I been here?"

"Don't know," replied the man, in the same jerky way.

Old King Brady was on his feet in an instant, but he speedily found that it was as much as he could do to stand. He's head was spinning about like a teetotum; he felt a horrible nausea and altogether found himself pretty badly broken up.

"You're hurt?" asked the man in a not unkindly tone.

"Yes—no. I don't know. I hope I shall be better presently. It was a bad fall. If I can only sit down a minute I think I shall come out all right."

"You can."

"Where? What place is this?"

"In my house. This is the place where I live. I am Mose, the hermit of the cattle pens."

"What?"

"You heard. You ain't deaf. Look at me. Ain't I handsome? Ha! Ha! I was rich once. I was worth a million in my mind."

"This man is mad," thought the detective. "But even if this were true, Mose was certainly right in one thing, for all about were a little enclosure, surrounded by fences about breast high. Old King Brady had fallen in the midst of a number of cattle pens.

"Come—with—me," said Mose, each word being uttered separately and with the abruptness of a pistol shot.

He led the way through a gate into one of the enclosures, then passed through another gate into another enclosure, thence through another and another, until at last they came near to a large frame building and paused before a little shanty which might be the office of the cattle yard, Old King Brady thought, but there seemed to be no business going on for there were no cattle in the pens.

Mose threw open the door and motioned for the detective to enter.

A greasy lamp burning inside showed a few old blankets thrown in a corner, a rudo table, and a broken chair.

"Will you sit down or lie down?" asked the man as he closed the door. "You can rest yourself a little while, till you are strong enough to move on. Then you must go. This is my den and you are the first man who has been inside of it in a year."

"Except yourself," said the detective, dropping wearily into the chair.

"Yes, except myself. I was a man once. Now I'm a thing. A hermit is a thing, isn't that so? I'm the hermit of the cattle pens. Ha! Ha! Once I was worth a million but I was

robbed, cheated, swindled, and by a man. I'd rather be a thing. Ha! Ha!"

"Tell me all about it," said the detective, kindly. The sight of the wretched being before him seemed to render his own trials easier to bear.

"Tell you what? I heard the noise when the fence broke, and I came out to see what the matter was, and found you. That's all there is to tell."

"No—no! I mean about yourself."

"Why should I tell you about myself? I'm a thing. Things are not interesting. I live here because nobody else would live here. Once there was a big business done in this place. These pens were full of cattle. The big building you saw was a slaughter-house, and employed a hundred men. Now the business is all gone to smash, and pretty soon the old building will fall with a crash. Ha! ha! Poetry! Did you know I was a poet? No—I s'pose not. I don't care whether you do or not. A man ruined the business and ruined a hundred of his fellow-men along with it. I'd rather be a thing than a man. Yes, I would. Ha! ha!"

"Well, you've got a comfortable place here, anyhow," said the detective sympathizingly. "I've seen the time when I would have been glad of one as good."

"You have?"

"Many's the time."

"Who are you anyway?"

"My name is Brady."

"Irish?"

"Yes."

"Humph!"

"You don't like the Irish evidently?"

"No, but they are better than some of us Americans—better than New Yorkers. New Yorkers are all frauds! It was a New Yorker who robbed me of the million I had—in my mind."

"How could this New Yorker rob you if your million existed only in your mind?"

"Now do you know that's something that has often puzzled me? I don't know what to make about it. I never had the million and yet this man Horsly robbed me."

"Horsly!" cried Old King Brady, pricking up his ears. "Was his name Horsly?"

"Yes; do you know him?"

"I do."

"Are you a friend of his?" cried the man, fiercely. "If you are I'm going to kill you here and now."

He leaped forward and seized the detective's arm with a vise-like grip, but Old King Brady wrenched himself free and gently pressed him back.

"Now, now, don't get excited," he said. "Horsly's no friend of mine. Tell me all about it. Perhaps I can do something to help you. Perhaps I can get your million back."

"How can you get it back when I never had it?" demanded the lunatic, beginning to pace the floor in a most excited way. "Who are you that can create money? Are you greater than God Almighty? If you think you are you're a fool."

"Be calm. I'm not silly enough to think I'm greater than God, nor can I create money, but I am a man whose business it is to right the wrongs of others, I—"

"A lawyer! A lawyer! Frauds! frauds! frauds all of them!" shrieked the man. "Oh, don't I hate the whole race of lawyers! What Horsly didn't get the lawyers did. They took my money—hard earned dollars, mind you, and left me only this."

He began fumbling round beneath the horse blanket, and from some concealment presently produced a greasy old paper, tied with three

strings of different colors, and scribbled all over with writing in ink.

"The history of my wrongs!" he shouted. "There it is! I wrote it! Wrote it in blood! blood! blood! Horsly's blood! Ha, ha! I shall live to cut that scoundrel's heart into mince meat yet. Read it, read it, I say!"

"Some other time. I've lost my glasses," replied the detective, consolingly, for the mere prospect of reading the unmeaning scrawls upon the paper was horrifying. "Let me see what you've got there. We can't do anything unless you can be calm."

"But you shan't do anything for me. I won't let you. You're a lawyer. I hate the whole brood!"

"You are mistaken. I am not a lawyer."

"But you said you were."

"No, I didn't. I said my business was to right the wrongs of others."

"Well, that's what the lawyers pretend to do, the liars, the cheats, the frauds."

"All the same, I'm not a lawyer."

"What are you then?"

"A detective."

"Humph! it's much the same. Still you look good. Perhaps you can't help your business. I'm going to trust you anyhow. I'm going to show you a few pieces of paper which cost me ten thousand dollars. Look here."

He untied the strings one by one, finally opening the paper.

Spreading it back upon the table, he took out ten stock certificates of one thousand shares each.

It was just what Old King Brady had expected. He had been prepared for it for some minutes.

Before him stood the true owner of that valuable Leadville property, the Golden Nugget, the man for whom Mr. Horsly had sought in vain.

A good hour had elapsed when Old King Brady took leave of that strange creature, the hermit of the cattle pens, at the foot of a flight of steps leading up to Leverett street. When they parted they shook hands most cordially, and it was noticeable that some of the insane look had gone out of the hermit's eyes.

"You can't do it," he said.

"Can't I? Well, perhaps not, but I propose to try," was Old King Brady's answer. "You have patience. You shall certainly see me again. Meanwhile keep close to your hut. It might ruin all if you were to be seen."

"I never leave it, except at night," was the answer. "They let me stay here because I keep the boys from stealing the lumber. I shall have to leave soon, though, for in the spring they are going to pull the place down."

"Long before that happens you will be ready to leave if I don't greatly miss my mark," said Old King Brady, as he walked away.

He was disgusted, yet pleased—discouraged, yet hopeful.

He had lost the James Boys, and with them the contents of the car of gold, yet fortune, as though in compensation, had pointed out the means by which he could right a great wrong.

"Wonder where they went to?" he thought. "That Jew they spoke of. If I only knew his name."

He was wondering about Charlie Terrill, too. What became of the boy after he left?

Precious time had been lost, and he had got to begin all over again, yet in spite of it all Old King Brady did not despair.

"I will go straight to the chief's house, and see if he had got back to the city yet," he resolved.

"I must have help here. I have fought this fight alone long enough. Fate seems to favor the James Boys. It is as if they bore a charmed existence; and yet—"

He paused suddenly, and stood staring ahead of him in blank amazement.

Down the street, coming toward him, quite a crowd was running—several men, one a policeman.

He had heard the noise, but until now he had scarcely noticed it.

Somewhat in advance of the rest, running for all they were worth, were two men, whose faces struck the detective as being decidedly familiar.

He looked again.

They were Frank and Jesse James.

CHAPTER XV.

ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BARS.

To explain such an unusual proceeding as the James Boys running before a mob like a couple of pickpockets caught in the act, we must go back to the moment when the outlaw brothers came dashing out of the express office with their stolen diamonds, only to find that the sleigh containing the boxes of gold had disappeared.

It would have been an awful thing for a devout church member to have been on hand just then and listened to the mild and gentle phrases which dropped from Jesse's lips.

"It was 'dogon' Clel Miller, the 'dogoned' this and the 'dogoned' that—only 'dogon' was not always the word employed.

But the talk was all done on the fly, so to speak. To have stopped would have been simple madness, for the wild shouts of "Thieves!" and "Murder!" in the stentorian voice of the porter could be distinctly heard behind them, mingling with others equally ominous. There was more than one person running down the street.

"Grasshoppers and garter snakes!" panted Frank; "I'm erbout winded—was pretty nigh plugged out afore this chase began, anyhow! What'n in time shell I do?"

"Brace up!" breathed Jesse, hoarsely. "We jest wanter dodge in som'ers. Let's cut round that 'ere monymint! Tough-lookin' old duffer, hain't he Frank?"

Jesse was alluding to the famous statue of John Winthrop, which stands in Scollays Square.

"Looks liker hoss-thief, with his long nose and his big collar," chuckled Frank as they ran. "Cut down the street, Jess, for— B'gosh, there's Clel!"

They were striking for Brattle street just as Clel Miller, "full as a goat," according to Jesse, came staggering along from Cornhill.

"Jess! Frank! Dogone yer picters! Hain't gwinter desart a feller, be ye?"

"Desert your sister!" hissed Jesse, turning upon the luckless Clel, and dragging him by the arm around into Brattle street. "Dod rot you, Clel Miller, what hev you done with the hoss an' pung? Speak out, man, afore I chaw yer ear off! Dogon it all ef this ere ain't ther dogonest dogoned how-de-do I ever heerd on in all my life."

"Jess! Jess! Leggo my collar! Yer a-chokin' me!"

"I've a good mind to dig yer liver out—whar's the hoss? Whar's them boxes of gold? So much fur trustin' a fool!"

"Say—say, they're over thar by the express office, hain't they, Jess?" whined Clel. "Say, don't kill me, Jess, don't do it! Didn't you 'n me fit tergeth in ther old days of Quantrell's gang? Say, Jess, for goodness' sake. Frank, take him off! He's a-stranglin' on me! Oh, Frank!"

"Leggo, Jess! Let him alone, you fool!" breathed Frank, hurriedly pulling his brother off of the helpless Clel, for Jesse had the outlaw up against the wall now and was engaged in the pleasing occupation of battering his head upon

the bricks. "We can't erford to lose Clel no-how, an' what's more, we wanter light right out of this pretty dogoned quick."

"I'd like ter kill him—I would like ter," panted Jesse, "but you're right, Frank—we've gotter git. Take hold of his other arm. We must pull him along somehow. 'Twon't do to leave no drunken man on our trail."

It was time to go, but still the danger might have been greater.

Somehow their pursuers had made a mistake. While Jesse and his companions dashed down Brattle street, those who followed chose Cornhill.

Before the James Boys had got half way to Elm street, it became very evident that they had either got to abandon Clel Miller or run a very serious risk of being caught.

Every moment Clel seemed to get worse. Twice he went down entirely; by the time they had reached the corner of Elm street he was quite unable to stand.

"What kinder dogoned rot gut hev you been histin' on, anyhow," growled Frank. "Great snakes, Jess, we've gotter leave him! If there's anything in this world I do despise it's a drunkard!"

"Jes' so," replied Jesse, dryly. "Rum's a cuss an' no mistake. You orter know ef any one does, Frank."

"Dry up, will yer? None of your flings. What be we gointer do with Clel?"

"We've gotter take him somehow."

"Can't be did. Look thar, brother!"

What Frank pointed to was a policeman, followed by several men running down a flight of steps between two buildings on the opposite side of the way. These steps led into Brattle Square from Cornhill.

"Drop him!" breathed Jesse. "Drop him and scoot."

They dropped poor Clel with all the suddenness of the traditional hot potatoe, and went flying along Elm street like the wind.

Not that the brothers knew the name of that street nor any other of the tangled ways of byways and alleys in which they now became involved.

It seemed to them that they were perpetually turning corners. They ran in just one direction and then another, until at last their pursuers were no longer heard behind them. They had managed to give them the slip somehow—how they hardly knew.

"I can't run one step further, nohow," panted Frank, stopping short.

"Guess there hain't no necessity for it, nuth'er," answered Jesse. "I can't hear nothin', kin you?"

"No."

"They muster gIVEN it up."

"Looks so. Whar be we, anyhow?"

"Blamed ef I know," replied Jesse, looking around at the mass of brick buildings, factories and sheds which surrounded them. This is the dogonest crookedest place ever I see. You had more time in it than 'I did; you orter know."

"Dunno nothin'," replied Frank, except that I wisht I hadn't interfered now, and had let you break Clel's blamed head."

"An' I'd a-done it, only for you. What d'yer s'pose became of the team, Frank?"

"I s'pose he left it to go and get a drink, and some one came along and froze onto it. Old King Brady, like enough."

"'Twarn't Old King Brady. He'd er-stayed and fit us. Thar's lots of grit in that old man."

"You bet thar is. Gness yer right. It was jest some horse thief who never dreamed what he was a gettin'. Jess, it's a bad job after all ther trouble we've had."

"Ain't it? Can't be helped though. We hadn't

orter meddled with them diamonds nohow, orter stuck to what we had, but it was a mighty big temptation. I only hope they are diamonds an' we ain't sucked in."

"Les have a look," suggested Frank.

Jesse raised no objection. Drawing into the shadow of a doorway they opened one of the packages.

"It's all straight," whispered Frank jubilantly as his eye caught sight of a great number of small glittering white gems.

"Looks so, but you can't always tell. Diamonds is ticklish property. Les see, thar's ten thousand marked unto each one of them, and thars five of them bundles; five tens is fifty, hain't it, Frank?"

"Of course, you thick headed galoot; but how do we know they're really worth ten thousand a piece? How do we know that hain't the value declared to the express company, an' twice as much as they're really worth?"

"That's what's ther matter. Never thought of that."

"You see?"

"You bet; an' ther gold in them boxes was worth a hundred thousand?"

"It's a bad swap, Jess."

"I'll be dogoned ef it ain't," said Jesse, sadly, "but it can't be helped now."

"What hed we better do?"

"Better try an' get under kiver somewheres, and hold onto what we've got."

"You're right. I tell you what 'tis, Jess, let's start West."

"Now?"

"Ez soon as thar's a train to take us. This here's no place for us."

"Whar's ther depot?"

"Dunno."

"We'd better try and find it, although I'm afraid thar won't be no train afore mornin'. Come on, Frank."

For a good half hour they continued to wander through the maze of streets in which they had become entangled, but could see nothing that looked like a railroad depot.

Frank was for inquiring their way of some one of the few persons whom they encountered, but Jesse wouldn't hear to it.

They were, in fact, like fish out of their native element, and scarcely knew what to do.

"It's played out, brother," said Jesse at last. "I'm satisfied of one thiug; we're going round in a circle an' hain't makin' no headway. I move we turn into the first hotel we come to and wait till daylight; then I'll manage to get some different togs somehow and shake ther town."

"They might take us in thar," suggested Frank, indicating a small, shabby-looking building across the street, which appeared to be a hotel something after the order of the Tippins House. "Suppose we try that."

"All right," replied Jesse. "Come on."

They had just started to cross the street when suddenly several men, headed by a police officer, came around the corner.

"There they are! There they are!" shouted some one, and the whole party started forward on the run.

"Gosh! they're after us!" whispered Frank. "We've got to git, Jess."

Jesse saw the danger and needed no second invitation.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot! It'll only make matters wurs," breathed Frank as his brother with good old Missouri promptness whipped out his revolver.

The warning came too late.

"Bang! Bang! Bang!" Three shots went echoing among the surrounding buildings and a man in the advancing crowd was seen to throw up his hands and drop.

"Now you have done it, you dogoned idiot!" hissed Frank as they ran. Will you never learn that these Eastern cities hain't like old Missouri, Jess? I tell you it's a mistake. The poople hyar hain't eddicated up to that sort of thing."

"I'll learn 'em then," panted Jesse, but he did not fire again. Following Frank, he dashed down the street like the wind.

Nor were their pursuers slow to follow. Among them were some just as good runners as the outlaw brothers.

What the end of the chase might have been it is hard to say, for all at once a man seemed to rise up before them, blocking their road with a cocked revolver in each hand.

"Hold, Jesse James! One step further and you're a dead man!" he exclaimed. "You've been lucky so far, but I want you to understand I don't always miss."

"Old King Brady! Great snakes!" breathed Jesse, stopping instinctively. At the same instant Frank slipped on a piece of bare ice and fell to the sidewalk with terrible force.

Now just how he managed it Old King Brady could have scarcely told two minutes later, for all in an instant he had snapped the handcuffs upon Jesse, and planting one foot upon Frank's neck, managed to hold him down.

"Boys, it's no use. I've got yer both," he said, as the pursuing crowd came rushing up.

"I'd a dogoned sight ratuer it would be you, Brady, than them blamed Boston bean-chawers," said Jesse, in an almost friendly tone.

"Where's the sleigh?" demanded Old King Brady.

"Dunno."

"What?"

"Dunno. We've lost it. Blame sight ruther you'd a-got it than to hev' things turn out the way they have."

By this time the pursuing party had come up, and Frank was collared.

"Who are you?" asked the officer, seeing that Old King Brady was in citizen's clothes.

The detective explained.

"What is the charge against these men?" he asked.

"There'll be a charge of murder now," was the reply. "They shot a poor fellow back there."

"But you were not chasing them for that?"

"No; oh, no! They robbed the night clerk at the Adams express office of a big lot of diamonds. I've been chasing them all over creation, thank goodness, or rather thanks to you, boss. I've got 'em now."

"Diamonds!" exclaimed Old King Brady. "Jesse, is this true? Now I begin to understand why you abandoned the sleigh. Come, you'd better give them up."

"Don't talk to me; I haven't a blame word to say," snarled Jesse, "an' Frank you see to it that you hold yer jaw."

"You seem to know them. Who are they?" demanded the policeman as the crowd pressed round.

"Well, I rather think I ought to know them. These are the famous James Boys of Missouri."

"Ah, come off!" called a voice from the crowd.

"Is it true?" demanded the policeman.

"Fact, I assure you," answered Old King Brady. "See, here are your diamonds, my friend. We want to get those fellows under cover as soon as possible. If you knew them as well as I do you'd see what reason I have for saying this."

"But you'll help me?"

"Of course."

"Get another pair of handcuffs?"

"Sorry to say I haven't."

"Well, we'll have to get along the best we

can with a string," said the policeman, tying Frank's wrist to his own. "The station is on this street and only a little way from here. Come with me, will you?"

"I'll come with you, my friend," said the detective. "I have something more to tell."

They took Jesse and Frank to the nearest station, and great was the excitement when their identity was disclosed.

"We better not keep them here," said the sergeant in charge, "the cells are out of repairs, take them to — street, officer. This is a very important catch."

"Gentlemen, I protest!" said Old King Brady. "You can scarcely form any idea how slippery them fellows are. If you had had as much experience with them as I've had you'd chain 'em down at once."

Jesse grinned at this, and even Frank's long and solemn face assumed a smile.

But the Boston police sergeant saw the joke in an entirely different light.

"Do you presume to tell me my business, sir?" he stormed. "I need no New Yorker to do that. James Boys or no James Boys we've got these fellows behind the bars now (there were iron bars in the station-house window) and I guess we'll be able to keep them there without your advice."

"But, my good friend——"

"Don't talk to me. You came here claiming to be Old King Brady, the detective. How do I know you are? I tell you—— Great Jerusalem! after 'm, officer! Look out! He's going to shoot!"

Now if ever there was a sudden shifting of scenes it was in that station-house. The story is one of the legends of the place to this day.

Jesse, handcuffed, was standing near Old King Brady, while Frank, whose hands had been released by the humane officer once they entered the station, stood just behind his brother, looking as meek and solemn as a Methodist parson, and he it known that few parsons can look more solemn than Frank James.

"Who would ever have supposed they'd dare to do it?" that sergeant said, after it was all over.

Dare!

Why, the James Boys in those days dared do anything.

Old King Brady knew.

Watching his chance, Frank, quick as lightning, dealt Old King Brady a blow between the eyes that sent him sprawling, at the same time tripping up the policeman with a dexterous twist of his leg and sending him on top of the detective.

The next thing the sergeant knew Jesse was striking out right and left with his manacled hands, while Frank, who had managed to retain one pistol when they searched him, was letting fly with a will.

Crack! crack! crack! went the shots as the brothers bolted for the door.

Two men went down, and one never got up again, either—mere spectators both.

"Scoot, Jess!" breathed Frank, as he flung the door open. "No Boston bean oater must hold us!"

They had been behind the bars, but it was only for a few minutes.

Now they were before them, and dashing down the street like the wind.

"Anyhow we've got the diamonds," said the sergeant an hour later, when word was brought in that the outlaws had not been caught. "We'll make the Adams express shell out for them. That story of a sleigh load of gold that the big Irishman told was all a fake, in my opinion. I don't believe he was Old King Brady at all."

The big Irishman had disappeared, following the James Boys, and had not since been seen.

CHAPTER XVI.

GROPING IN THE DARK.

"HELLO, Charlie! Are you there?"

"You bet. That you, Jim?"

"Course 'tis. I was most awfully afraid they was going to separate us. Charlie, this is a bad state of affairs."

"I tell you it just is now," replied Charlie Terrell's usually cheerful voice in the gloomiest accents. "I wish I had stuck to my news-stand and had nothing to do with that infernal car of gold."

"Well, I don't then. Where'd I be if you hadn't happened to be in that car? Frozen stiff on the Kansas plains most likely, or was it still Colorado? I declare I've forgot."

"Don't make much difference. I should say, so long as you're frozen. But there's no use in talking about the past; we've got enough of the present to bother us. Can nothing be done?"

"Charlie, I don't know. Here we are both tied up like a couple of mummies, and only left so we can speak because the place is such a blamed lonely one that no one could possibly hear us even if we hollered loud enough to wake the dead. I warned you, old fellow, that policeman was crooked, and I knew it, but you wouldn't hear."

Was this true?

Unfortunately, yes.

Don't think we've got any grudge against the Boston police and are making up a tough story.

Far from it. The Boston police are like the force in any other city, a mixture of smart and stupid, good and bad.

Officer Mulvany had been on the force for some time, and had always borne a clean record.

But \$100,000 in gold is a big thing to fall over.

When Mulvany fell over the boxes in the sleigh, he had not the moral courage to rise again. In other words he preferred to stay down, and he did.

Officer Mulvany resolved that the gold should never belong to any one else with his consent.

"Sure, and I'll buy all Ireland wid it," he reflected. "What's my position on the force amount to alongside of it? Nothin'; faith, I know a liar when I see wan, and I know that nayther of thim byes is a lyin'. I'll drive 'em to Paddy Rooney's, and we'll work the ould slaughter house racket this time for big stakes and the last."

By which soliloquy it would seem that in spite of the cleanliness of his record this was not the first time Officer Mulvany had gone astray.

It had all been done so quick that the boys were given no opportunity to defend themselves.

The instant the great gate closed behind the sleigh there stood a burly fellow with a cocked revolver in each hand, and there alongside of them was Mulvany with another.

"An' if ye so much as wink yer eye-tooth you'll chew glue," he plaintively remarked.

There didn't seem to be any eye-teeth winking around there just then.

"You're a fraud!" burst Charlie. "Ah! how I would like to——"

"Don't—or I'll pepper you anyhow. Jump out!"

"You, too!" called the big man on the ground—he was Mulvany's friend Rooney—waving his pistol at Jim.

What could the boys do but to obey?

"I wonder if there's an honest man in Boston?" sighed Charlie, as he dropped to the ground.

"Blame few, let me tell you," chuckled Rooney, whose experience was limited to the saloon. "Say, you look honest enough though. Tell me, was you glvin' the still to Mulvany or

is there raly gold in thim boxes? Come now, be rasonable and I may persuade him to let you off, though he's a terrible fellow wanst he gets going, do yer mind!"

"Find out!" snapped Charlie. "Don't ask me. I tell you, gentlemen, there's going to be trouble if this thing goes on."

"We'll fix that," cried Mulvany, seizing Charlie in that iron grip already displayed and throwing him down.

Roony went for Jim almost at the same instant.

Struggles and protests were alike useless.

In a moment Charlie and Jim found themselves helpless prisoners. It might have been otherwise but for the loss of their revolvers during the attack upon the car.

"We'll hang the fly one on a meat-hook an' slaughter him if he so much as winks his eye," said Roony.

He dragged poor Charlie through a door which communicated with the interior of the big building alongside of them, and after carrying him up-stairs, left him in total darkness.

Now Jim had been brought in too, and thrown upon the floor without a word from the burly saloon-keeper, who slammed a door and locked it as he departed, leaving the boys alone.

This was the condition of affairs, and a very bad one it was, to say the least.

"There's no use in our quarreling, Jim," said Charley in reply to his friend's last remark. "We've seen some tough times together and we're likely to see tougher. I tell you this is no joke."

"Do you imagine I thought it was?"

"No, no; but seriously. Here's this crooked policeman and his gin selling pal with the boxes of gold in their clutches. It's more wealth than they ever dreamed of, I suppose. It's bound to throw them off their head."

"Which don't mean any good for us."

"You bet it don't. They'd just as soon stick a knife into us as not. I tell you, Jim, we are in terrible danger here."

"But what can we do?"

"Now you've got me. You know Boston and I don't. Where do you suppose we are?"

"I only know we're somewhere near the East Cambridge bridge where we crossed. We were on Charles street, you know. This building may face Leverett street. When he was dragging me through the yard I didn't notice in which direction we went. Oh, how I would like to have choked that man!"

"There's no use in wasting time in regrets," said Charlie. "If we were to do that I've got as many as you to think about. Just as sure as my name's Terrill, I ain't going to stay this way one minute longer than I can help."

"What do you propose to do?"

"Break loose. Where are you? Roll toward me."

"Look out! There may be trap doors. Slaughter houses are full of them."

"We've got to take our chances," replied Charlie, rolling over and over on the floor.

Even as he did so, he was wondering what the treacherous policeman was doing with the ten boxes of gold; but he inwardly resolved that he would not mention them again until he was out of this desperate fix.

"Hello! Here you are!" he exclaimed as he came in sudden contact with Jim. "Hold on."

"We're all here anyhow, Charlie. What next?"

"How are your teeth, old fellow?"

"My teeth! Boss! Why?"

"Why, I'll give you something to chew on. You might tackle the rope that's tied about my arms."

"Good scheme!" cried Jim.

He went to work with a will.

The rope proved a tough morsel, but in the end Jim succeeded in gnawing it through.

"That's the talk!" cried Charlie. "Now we're all right."

"But you can't see to untie me. It's as dark as midnight here."

"Don't want to see. I've got a knife"

"A knife! Why, I thought——"

"That the James Boys cleaned me out? Well, pretty near, but not quite. You see I gave up what I had and they didn't search me very carefully. It's only a penknife, though, but all the same it'll do the biz."

"Just as well as a carving knife," replied Jim, as Charlie after a moment's effort cut the rope. In a moment so far as it went the boys were free.

"Got any matches?" asked Charlie.

"Not a one."

"Nor I either, they were all left in the car. Hark, they are making a big racket down below there. We'd better wait a few moments until it's quiet. Then I propose to light out."

The noise which sounded like the slamming of doors did not last long.

When silence was added to the darkness Charlie began again.

"We want to get to one of the walls," he said, "and work our way round till we come to the door. Take hold of my hand, Jim. We may get separated and spend the balance of the night finding each other. That wouldn't pay."

They tried it and presently found the door.

It was fast—locked on the outside.

"What's to be done now?" asked Jim.

It was a puzzling question. Charlie could not tell.

Every effort to open the door only resulted in failure.

In spite of all the strength the boys could bring to bear upon it, the door refused to budge.

"Let's keep on around the walls," said Charlie. "Perhaps we may find a window or another door and have better luck."

They moved on, Charlie in advance this time, keeping close to the wall.

They had scarcely gone a dozen steps when he gave a sudden exclamation and darted back against Jim so suddenly that it almost threw him down.

"What's the matter?" demanded Jim.

"Matter! Why, there's a hole there! I nearly tumbled in; one leg did go in for a fact, and if I hadn't thrown myself back as I did the other one would have gone after it. I declare it's taken all the life out of me. I feel quite faint."

"Must be some sort of trap," suggested Jim.

"It evidently is."

"What shall we do?"

"Investigate it. This may be the very way out we are looking for—who knows?"

"I'll be blest if I see how."

"I'll show you," said Charlie, quite briskly, considering the shock he had just experienced.

He flung himself flat upon the floor and began crawling about the opening.

"It's big!" he said, presently. "More than four feet square. Hello, here's a rope!"

"Hanging down through the hole?"

"You bet."

"Well, we don't want anything better than that. Is it fastened above?"

"Seems to be."

"Try it."

Charlie tugged at the rope.

It was fast.

"Jim!" he called.

"What is it?"

"I believe I could slide down this rope if I tried."

"Haven't the least doubt of it, my dear fellow, but where will you land?"

"On my feet, you bet. I always do."

"But seriously, Charlie, I wouldn't risk it. Who can tell what danger you run into? That scoundrel may kill you. If we only had light and you could tell where you're going it would be a different thing."

"Jim," replied Charlie, "one thing is certain. I can't stay idly here and I won't. I must be doing something—it's my nature. If I knew there were ninety-nine chances to one that by going down this rope I would go to my death, and that the one would give me that gold to restore to its rightful owners, I'd take the one chance every time."

"I don't know whether I could say as much as that," replied Jim, "but I think it's an awful ticklish business to slide down that rope in the dark; all the same, though, if you do it I'm bound to do it too."

"I knew you would!" exclaimed Charlie.

"Hark! Let's listen and let's reason. I can't hear a sound," he added presently, after leaning down through the trap. "If this is really a slaughter-house, the rope probably leads to the ground floor, and used for hoisting meat up-stairs, but——"

"I don't think the place is used at all now," exclaimed Jim. "I haven't been round this way for a good many years, for you see I lived in an entirely different part of the city, but it seems to me that I can remember a slaughter-house just about here—a big square building, shut up and all dropping to pieces."

"Probably this is the place, then. If it were still used as a slaughter-house they would hardly dare to lock us in here; the risk would be too great. I'm going to try it now, Jim."

"Let me go first, Charlie."

"You bet I won't. If I land all right I'll give the rope a shake or holler, just according to circumstances. In either case it will mean come down."

Drawing on his thick buckskin gloves to protect his hands, Charlie clutched the rope, wound his legs around it, and swung himself over the hole.

Jim waited breathlessly, listening to the sound produced by the chafing of the rope against the gloves. In a few seconds that ceased, and all was still. He did not even hear Charlie when he struck bottom, and he began to feel alarmed.

Presently the rope was shaken violently.

"Jim! Jim!" called a voice from below.

Jim had already put on his own gloves, and he now seized the rope without the slightest hesitation, and swinging clear of the floor, went flying down through the trap with fearful speed; a few seconds and he struck soft ground with a force which sent him over on his back.

"Charlie! Charlie! Where are you, Charlie?" he exclaimed as he scrambled to his feet.

Then all in an instant a strong arm was thrown about him, a knee planted in the small of his back, while an iron hand clutched at his throat.

Coming so suddenly and in the darkness, the sensation was horrible.

Poor Jim gave himself up for lost.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE CELLAR.

"TURN on the light, Jess. I've got another. Wanter see what he's like."

"It's the boy's pardner, Frank. Thar hain't no doubt about that. Dogon it all, we orter kill as we go along. It's the only way. Jes' so sure as you show mercy to some folks they'll rise up agin you agin."

The voices were those of the James Boys, but

this was scarcely necessary to enable Jim Lucas to identify them. The names were quite enough.

He tried to speak, to struggle, but found himself quite powerless to do either; and as Charlie likewise remained silent, he could only assume that he was in the same fix.

Suddenly a light shot up.

It showed Jim the situation.

Before him stood Jesse James with one arm wound about Charlie's neck, the hand being pressed against his mouth, while the other held a dark lantern, the light striking upon Frank's solemn face, which was right in front of his arm.

"It's them boys. I knowd it," exclaimed Jesse. "Let go of him, Frank. If he croaks blow his brains out. They left you one shooter, you know."

"Yes, and here it is," replied Frank letting go his hold on Jim and producing a revolver. "We can kill them one time as well as another Jess, and it may not be necessary to kill them at all. I'm opposed to shootin' unless thar's some reason for it. You know that was allus my motter, an' it's a dogoned good one too."

It would have sounded like a huge joke to one who knew the James Boys for what they were.

But in the name of all that's mysterious, how came the brothers in the cellar of the old slaughter house anyway?

It was something needing explanation certainly, and we may as well explain now as later on.

As will be remembered, we parted company with the brothers at the moment when they made their wild dash from the police station.

To the Boston sergeant this seemed a bold stroke, but it was nothing to what the James Boys done many's the time before.

But the very boldness of the thing was its success. With the possible exception of Old King Brady, every one was taken by surprise.

In placing the old detective *hors de combat* the first thing, the James boys made a wise move, for it gave them time to gain a start which they used to the best possible advantage, as may be supposed.

They were out of the door and running down the street in an instant. Before any one could recover their wits they had turned a corner, leaped a fence and gained a stable yard.

A big bulldog flew at them, barking furiously.

Fortunately the animal was chained and could not harm them, but the noise he made was likely to give their pursuers the clew.

Over another fence and into an alley was the next move, and it took downright pluck to do it, for Jesse was handcuffed still.

"Oh, if I could only get these infernal irons off!" he groaned as they ran along the alley.

"Have patience! I kin fix that, an' I will jest as soon as we are clear of them bloodhounds," Frank replied.

"How'll you do it?"

"Hain't I got a file! What's the matter with you?"

"It would take you a year to file them off!"

"Not much. My file's extra tempered. I kin do it, Jess, you bet!"

"I doubt it," replied Jesse almost despairingly. "Hello, here's that dogoned bridge again!"

"Is it the same one we came over?"

"Looks like it."

They stopped beside the broken fence where Old King Brady had fallen and surveyed the scene.

Behind them in the distance the sound of men running could be distinguish. It was evident that they were not safe yet.

"Look hyar, I vote we jump down into that lot," said Frank. "There's splendid chances to hide among them cattle pens."

"Betcher life! That's the idea."

They jumped.

Landing somewhere near the scene of Old King Brady's disaster they crouched down in one of the cattle pens and waited.

But they waited in vain. Their pursuers seemed to go off in another direction. In a few minutes all was still.

"Dogon the dogonedest luck I ever experienced since the day I was born?" stormed Jesse, in subdued tones. "Here we've lost the boxes of gold what we followed all the way from Leadville, and now whip goes the diamonds on top of them."

"And all on account of Old King Brady," growled Frank. "Thar's jest one thing I want live fer, and that is to kill that man."

"Which you won't never do," retorted Jesse. "He's bullet proof, an' no mistake erbout it. Look hyar, brother, ef yer gwinter file off them irons you better start now. It'll be next Christmas afore yer through."

But it wasn't so bad.

Frank's file was a splendid one and the handcuffs, a pair Old King Brady had picked up in Boston, proved to be of indifferent steel.

It took time, certainly, and considerable of it, but they were off at last, and Jesse breathed a sigh of relief when he found his hands free.

"Now we can do something," he said. "That blamed Brady is the only man who ever put the bracelets onto me, and, dogon him, he's done it twict."

"What's yer scheme, Jess?" asked Frank. "Can anything be done to get back the gold?"

"I'd like to have you tell me what."

"How can I tell when I don't know where it is?"

"Same with me."

"Are you gwinter start West as we arranged?"

"Not now that we've lost the diamonds. No, I'm goin' ter stay here till I can make some kinder haul."

"What about Clel?"

"Let Clel go to pot. It's all his fault, anyhow. I intend to cut his liver out next time we meet."

"Well, we mought as soon get out of this here stock-yard, anyhow," said Frank, looking around.

"Not that way, though," said Jesse, as his brother made a move toward the street.

"Why not?"

"There may be some one laying for us. Let's cross the yard and go out on the other side."

"A good idea. Come on."

Together they pushed on, opening gate after gate as they passed from one pen to other. This soon brought them near to the old slaughter house. Here there was a flight of wooden steps leading up into a yard.

"Hark!" said Frank, suddenly catching Jesse by the arm. "Hark! There's some one up thar talkin'."

They listened.

On the level above the thick voices of two men could be heard quarreling.

From their position at the foot of the steps the James Boys could hear over every word, and a highly interesting conversation it proved.

"Half! An' is it half yo want?" one of the speakers was saying. "Man dear, yer a perfect hog, so yer are. Half! Hear him! Be the livin' powers, all he did was to shake an old pistol with divil a bullet in it, an' now he has the impudence to ax fer half."

"Yer a liar! I loaded it meself," retorted the second voice. "If you don't believe there's a bullet in it s'posin' ye let me show yer. No! yer don't want that. I guess not. Mulvany, I tell you what you are—yer a fraud."

"An' yer another. Yer fayther was wan before ye."

"Whist, whist! We play fair. I've got the gowld in my premises, and you know there's some risk in that."

"Primitives! Whose premises? The tin boxes of gowld is in the cellar of the ould slaughter-house yonder, an' it's no more your premises than mine. But what's the use in quarreling? We've got the rocks and a big pile of 'em, too. Let's make the best of it and have another ball."

Then they moved off out of hearing, and a door was heard to slam.

Jesse had caught Frank's hand and pinched it almost till the blood came.

"Did you hear?" he whispered.

"Hear! You bet your sweet life I heard."

"What do you make of it?"

"Frank," breathed Jesse, "thar's only one thing ye can make of it—that is, the gold's hyar some'ers. We've run right inter the fellers what stole ther sleigh."

"I'll be dogoned ef you hain't right, Jess. Leastways it looks so. But we must be very cautious ef we want do anything. Ef we hain't we're bound to get left."

They crept up the steps, never stopping to think that they were leaving tell-tale tracks behind them, for the snow lay here just as it had fallen. In a second they were in the slaughter-house yard.

There was the big building, the gate, the side entrance to Rooney's saloon—everything just as Charlie Terrill and Jim Lucas had seen it. What is more, there was the very identical sleigh they had stolen in Waltham drawn up alongside the slaughter-house door. The horse was gone and so were the boxes, but there was no mistaking the sleigh.

Through the side door of the saloon a light shown and the outlaws could see a policeman in full uniform standing before the bar talking to a red-faced man, who was pouring out whisky from a demijohn behind.

"Great snakes! thar's a cop!" breathed Frank, catching Jesse by the arm and pulling him back.

"Leggol" snapped Jesse. "Don't care if he's the sheriff of Boston himself, I'm good for him. See, Frank, he's so full he can hardly stand. Have you got a shooter about you? They cleaned me out completely."

"Yes, thar's one in my boot," whispered Frank.

"One's as good as a dozen. I see it all. It's the cop that stole the sleigh. That other feller's his friend—he's run it in here."

"Sure's you live, Jess."

"An' now they're a squabbling about who shall hev the biggest share. Well, well! Human nature seems to be the same everywhere you go; here in Boston it's just ther same as in old Missouri. Frank, we've gotter get that gold."

"How be we gwin ter fix it?"

"Dogoned ef I know. Let's think."

"There ain't no time ter spend in thinking. Whar do you make out they've put it?"

"Why, in this here slaughter-house, of course."

"Exactly. They're only waiting for a good chance to turn it into cash. Dogon 'em! Dogon every bean-eater in this dogon town! I'll larn 'em not to meddle with my affairs! Gimme that shooter, Frank."

"Guess I'll keep it meself," replied Frank, coolly. "When a feller's reduced to one, it's always best to keep it by him, and be on the safe side."

"Frank James, what are you insinervatin' on?"

"Hain't insinervatin' nawthin. Jess, you're talking foolish! Of course you wouldn't give up

your last shootin' iron to no man alive. Looker hyer. D'ye see that sleigh rung? Yer don't want no better weepin nor that."

"Them fellers 'll hev us a-weepin' ef we don't tackle 'em soon," snarled Jesse.

He stole to the sleigh and possessed himself of the rung.

"Follow me and make no more noise than a chip munk," breathed Frank, and he stole toward the side door of Paddy Rooney's refectory, which still stood partly open, for the fact is, the policeman and his friend had been celebrating their streak of good luck to that extent that it made no sort of difference to either whether the door was open or closed.

"Hist!" breathed Frank, taking his station on one side of the door. "Lay over there, Jess. When they come out go for 'em. No killing less it's necessary, mind. It'll be sure to bring bad luck."

They waited, listening.

Mulvany and his friend were pledging themselves in a glass of gin.

Jesse grinned, winking at Frank, as he took in their conversation.

They were like brothers now. Each was willing the other should have the whole ten boxes of gold, providing only that he stood ready to invest it all in gin.

"Le's go look at it, Pat!" cried Mulvany at last. "Sure an' it's only wan box we tried. The rist may be all stones for ought a man kin teil."

"Wan more nip, Mul, and we'll do it. We'll burst open every box. Sure, if they're all like the first we're made men for the rist of our lives?"

"You bet we are. Won't be no need of goin' through the lusers in the slaughter-house thin, Mul."

"I should say not. Here ye go! Good luck to ye! May every gould bar in the boxes make two!"

"Might's well make it three while yer about it!" laughed Rooney, gulping down his liquor. "Come on, Mul!"

He flung the glass upon the bar with a force which shattered it into a thousand pieces, at the same time turning out the gas, for his place was supposed to be closed long before this.

"Come on," he repeated, staggering toward the door. "Come on, Mul. I'll get a lantern and—howly saints, what's this?"

Biff, whack!

He found out what it was.

It's no joke to have a heavy cart-rung brought down upon one's head when wielded by an arm capable of felling an ox.

It was just one of these little pleasantries so common with the James boys. One of Jesse's jokes, so to speak—fun of the real old Missonri kind. Rooney rolled over like a stone.

"Up with your hands!" hissed Frank, ramming the revolver in Mulvany's face.

"Up wid me hands, is it? An' fer what?" gasped Mulvany. "Di ye think I want to get my hands shot off?"

"Up with yer hands or I'll shoot down your throat!"

"Say, say, cully, I'm a cop. You don't dare to shoot me, so yer don't. I arrist yez both in the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Divil a difference whether it's murder or manslaughter. Come on."

He lurched forward and tried to grab Frank.

There was no need of shooting here—Frank saw it at a glance.

He slipped aside, and over went the bold Mulvany head first into the snow.

"Jes' keep an eye onto 'em both, brother," breathed Jesse. "This is a streak of our old

luck. I'll be sure to find a rope in the saloon. Shoot 'em if they so much as wink an eye."

In two minutes time they had Mulvany bound and gagged. With Rooney the process was scarcely necessary. Jesse's rap over the head had knocked out what little sense the gin had left in the saloon keeper's bullet-head.

"Now to business," breathed Jesse, jubilantly. "This is reg'lar genewine Missonri luck. Let's pitch the big one inside somewheres. We can make the Mick show us where they've hid the gold."

"The Mick!"

Oh, the look that Mulvany gave them then!

This insult was worse by far than the loss of his stolen treasure. Fortunately for Jesse's peace of mind, however, the gag prevented Mulvany from uttering a word.

The outlaws now picked up the saloon-keeper and carried him between them into the slaughter-house.

Jesse had found a dark lantern in the saloon and by its aid they discovered a harness room with a good lock on the door attached to that part of the building used as a stable. In this room they secured Rooney, and in a stall adjoining found their stolen horse.

"Luck! Luck! Great chunks of it," whispered Jesse. "Now for the cop and the gold!"

They had thrown Mulvany inside the saloon while they were attending to his companion, and now returning Jesse untied the cord which bound his legs.

"Looker hyer, neighbor," he said, "we know all about it. You stole a sleigh full of boxes from in front of the Adams Express office. We want you to show us whar you've put them boxes. No talk is necessary, and no shenanagan won't be tolerated. Take us right to the place where you hid them or I'll scatter your brains against the wall."

It was a forcible argument—very.

With Mulvany while the spirit was willing spirits of another sort too freely partaken had made the flesh weak, particularly about the legs.

It was just as much as they could do to get him into the slaughter house for he was dead drunk now.

"Take out the gag," said Frank. "He hain't got life enough to holler. We'll have to get him to show you the place he hid the boxes quick, Jess, or he won't be able to do it at all."

The word had scarcely been spoken when to Jesse's intense astonishment he saw Frank and the lantern vanish through an open trap door in the floor which until now had been unobserved.

"Great snakes!" he said, letting go his prisoner and leaping forward.

Mulvany reeled and fell heavily against him.

The next thing Jesse knew he was falling through the darkness, and the trap was heard to close with a bang.

Now, thank goodness, we were not around when the outlaw brothers picked themselves up unharmed from the floor of that cellar.

There was not much spare air down there underneath the slaughter house, but what there was grew absolutely sulphurous with the strictly A 1 Sunday school sentiments which fell from Jesse's lips.

Just then something else fell.

What it was or from where it came it took a moment to realize.

"Jim! Jim!" it shouted, when Jesse sprang upon it, finding a boy very much of Charlie Terrill's size.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRAIL GROWS HOT.

"I WANT a room"

"You look so to me. I should say you needed

one bad, but you'll have to go somewhere else to look for it. We can't accomodate your kind here."

"What's the reason you can't?"

"You know."

"Do you know what this is, young man?"

"Certainly, sir. Beg pawdin', I'm suah. Any room in the house, sir. You've only to choose. Do you want me to keep that till mornin' for you, sir? You know there's some tough characters comes here, and we can't help it—it might get lost."

The old man in the muddy ulster who, upon entering the Brighton House on Cambridge street, a cheap hotel of the worst type, inquired for a room, and exhibited to the dudish clerk a hundred dollar bill.

"No, I will take care of it," he replied, almost sternly. "Young man, I showed you that bill to command your attention. Look alive—I want to talk to you. I am a detective. Here is my shield. I want to get where I can overlook a short, thickset man with a slouch felt hat and a brown coat who I just saw enter here."

"Can't say I seen any such man," replied the clerk of the Brighton House, closing like an oyster.

"Will this refresh your memory?"

The old man threw down a twenty dollar bill.

"Oh, certainly, that puts a different face on it, sir," said the clerk, grabbing the bill. "Just you come with me."

He led the way up-stairs to the floor above the street, and, moving along a dirty, ill-lighted hall, pointed toward a door marked 10.

"He's in there, sir," he whispered.

"Alone?"

"Guess not."

"Who with?"

"Guess he's with Red Jim Slavin, sir. That's his room."

"And who may Red Jim Slavin be?"

"What?" whispered the clerk. "Didn't you never hear of him? Why, he bested Dooney-Mulligan in five rounds, and—"

"I see. A slugger."

"Yes."

"Look here," said the detective, I want to listen to what's being said in there."

"But—" began the clerk.

"But you'll have to show me into the next room, young man. The law gives me this power. Do you want to run against the law?"

This specious if not strictly veracious argument prevailed.

In a moment the adjoining room was at his disposal.

Here was a dividing door and a fan-light: just the things had they been necessary, but they were not, for at that very moment the door of No. 10 opened and footsteps were heard in the hall.

"The thundering fool is so drunk he can't be roused," the detective, who was instantly on the alert, heard the man muttering, passed along the hall and down-stairs.

"I've nothing more to do here," whispered the detective, and without pausing he left his concealment and stole down-stairs after the man, following him out into the street.

"If I can't run one end of the case I can another," he reflected. "We have to take things as they come in this world. I've lost the James Boys, but I've found brother Horsly. Wonder what job he's got on hand at this late hour that renders it necessary for him to engage the services of a slugger and adopt a disguise?"

Now this sounds like Old King Brady, and it was, in fact, the great detective and no one else.

It was between midnight and morning. As soon as he had recovered from the blow given by

Frank James, the detective had left the station without a word to the uncivil sergeant at the desk.

"They'll never catch 'em," he muttered. "This is the end of the case, I'm afraid. Evidently they lost the sleigh, though. Wonder what became of it? By gracious, but it's a mixed-up mess!"

Now there had been a perfect stampede from the station after the James boys, and by the time Old King Brady got ready to leave the chances of his overtaking the brothers certainly appeared very slight.

"Guess I'll have a try at it anyhow," he muttered. "Sometimes the old dog can catch the scent where the young ones fail."

He walked slowly down the street, thinking how he would have acted if he had been in the place of Jesse James, and arriving at the conclusion that his first care would have been to double the nearest corner.

Consequently Old King Brady turned the corner, and soon found himself abreast of a fence inclosing a yard, which he could see probably was skirted by an alley on the other side.

"Now if I'd been in their place I'd probably have gone over that fence," thought the detective, and he immediately put the thought into action, narrowly escaping the chained bull-dog on the other side.

"By gracious! I heard that dog barking as I sat in the station," he muttered. "This is certainly the way they went."

Indeed, the footprints in the yard showed that he was right, and when he had leaped the other fence he found more evidence of the same sort in the alley.

In a few moments the detective was standing on Leverett street near the place where he had fallen into the slaughter house yard.

Looking down he could see that the snow was even more trampled than when he left the spot, and he felt that the trail was getting hot.

But right here something occurred to distract his attention.

There was a man in the act of ascending the steps by which he himself had left the yard but a short time before.

The man was Mr. Horsly.

In spite of the clumsy disguise he had adopted Old King Brady recognized him at a glance.

"He's there alone. Now is certainly my chance," he was muttering. "There's no use to fool with him; he's got to give up those papers. Things must take their course and at once!"

He never saw Old King Brady, who had dropped down in the shadow of the broken fence.

Thus the detective had suddenly found himself shadowing Mr. Horsly instead of tracking the James Boys.

Why had he abandoned the larger game for the smaller?

Had he?

The James Boys, it is true, had stolen \$100,000, but this man was trying to steal a whole mine, and one of the richest in Leadville at that.

To the Brighton House and back again.

This was the work Old King Brady found ready for him now.

That Mr. Horsly had previously made some arrangement with the drunken ruffian in No. 10 to do a dirty job for him, there could be no question. It was equally certain that failing to secure his services at the time they were wanted, he had determined to do the job himself.

Upon reaching the steps, Mr. Horsly, without the faintest suspicion that he was being shadowed, hastened down into the cattle yard, and taking one of the alleys between the pens made a straight line for the hermit's little hut.

There was a light burning within, and the man paused, peering in through the little window.

In a moment he made a spring for the door, disappearing before the detective could come up.

"Thunder! I shall be too late if I don't hurry!" breathed Old King Brady.

Was he not too late already?

"Murder! Murder!"

Upon the still night air the cry arose.

It came from the hermit's little hut.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION.

"WHAT in thunderation brings you fellers here?" demanded Jesse James, shaking poor Charlie by the collar as a dog might shake a rat.

"Let me go! You're chokin' me!"

"Chokin' you! I'll carve the heart out of you ef you don't answer! Speak up now! What brings you here?"

"How can you expect him to talk with your fingers about his throat?" asked Jim with a touch of sarcasm, which drew from Frank: "that's right, young fellow; Jess leggo."

"Praps we mought as well take it easy," grumbled Jesse. "Hyar we are and fer all I see hyar we've got to stay. But I must insist upon my question being answered. How came you two fellers hyar?"

"Better tell him, Charlie," suggested Jim. "Way things are it can't do no harm."

"No, but this can a lot," sneered Frank displaying the everlasting revolver. "Boy you tell!"

And not being bullet proof like Old King Brady, Charlie told about all there was to tell, Frank and Jesse pumping out fact after fact with many threats and "dogons."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Frank, who with all his solemnity after all had the strongest sense of humor about him. "Hain't it odd that we should meet again here in this blasted cellar with the gold right under our noses and we not able to do a thing?"

"What!" exclaimed Charlie, "you don't mean to say—"

"Don't I!" interrupted Frank, dramatically, flashing his lantern over into the other corner of the cellar, "look there!"

"The boxes, by time!" exclaimed Jim.

"And worth about as much to us in our present condition as so many boxes of soap," replied Frank. "Say, Jesse, I know you don't believe much in luck, but I tell you it's luck, downright luck, what's sent us these hyar boys. Either one of them can go through—you know what I mean."

"Yes, try it!" cried Jesse, eagerly.

"Looker hyar, fellers!" continued Frank, "I'm a man of a few words, and them few I make pretty dogoned plain. We came all the way from Leadville on account of that gold, Mr. Terrill, and it's most mightily against the grain for me to see two drunken Micks get the best of us now. We tumbled in hyar accidentally, Jesse, and we did— See that trap-door up thar in the floor? Well, that's whar we kin down, and jest as we did the blame thing came down, too, and I believe it was all because that drunken cop fell over on top of it. It's out of our reach, anyhow; it's night and this building's deserted, so the dear knows when we'll be let out. We may even be left to starve to death. The cop's drunk an' so's his pardner. Now ef some one could only get out another way, open the trap an' let a ladder down, what's to hinder our gettin' every dogon box of gold onto that sleigh afore daylight? Terrill, you're nobody's fool—you see."

"You seem to know me," said Charlie, not a little taken aback at this complete change of front.

"Reckon I do. I worked a while in the Golden

Nugget. I bought papers of you many's the time in Leadville."

I think I remember your face. What is it that you want me to do?"

"I'll show," said Frank. "Como this way, boys. An' don't you look so sour about it," he whispered to Jesse. "Thar's more flies caught with molasses than vinegar any day."

He led the way to one corner of a cellar and pointed to a wooden drain half buried in the ground which passed through the wall of the slaughter house.

Charlie grasped the situation at a glance. If both Mulvany and his friend were drunk and helpless, as Frank asserted, if one could but get through, there would be no trouble in letting the rest out, or—Charlie's breath came quick as he thought of it—in calling the police to their help.

"Will you try it, young fellow?" asked Frank.

"I'm afraid I'm too stout. I—suppose I got stuck?" replied Charlie, looking doubtfully at the drain.

"Of course neither Jess nor I could do it. This other chap—what about him?"

"I'm ready to try," answered Jim, promptly. He gave Charlie a look which seemed to say, "Have no fears, old fellow. I understand just what you want, and it shall be done."

Further talk followed.

Frank was flattering, and promised to divide with the boys in case they succeeded in getting the gold away, while Jesse, who began to see daylight, discreetly held his tongue.

It was at length decided that Jim should make the attempt, and without the least display of hesitation, he crawled into the drain.

"Now mind!" called Frank, "ef you try any tricks you'll find your friend with a bullet in his brain, and by time, I'll shoot you ef I'm obliged to shoot myself right away after to save the hangman a job!"

Ominous words! They made Jim Lucas tremble. He had no other notion than to go straight for the police, for this he felt sure was Charlie's wish.

He made no answer. Crawling along the drain, working his way in snake-like fashion, he presently disappeared from view.

One—two—five minutes passed—and all was still.

"He must be through by this time," said Frank, anxiously. "Great snakes! What's that?"

"Murder! Murder! Murder!" they could hear some one shouting.

Crack! Crack! went two shots outside.

"He's been caught, by Judas!" gasped Jesse.

"Sure's a gun!" echoed Frank. "Jess, there's only one chance for us now—it must be done."

What was Frank James about to do?

He seized an old ax which he had previously discovered in one corner of the cellar, and began hacking away at one of the parts which supported the structure above.

"Frank, are you mad?" breathed Jesse. "You'll hev the building down onto us ef you don't look out."

"It's the only way," answered Frank. "Tain't a question of the gold now. That boy has been nipped and we'll be ef we stay hyar. By the help of this post placed against the wall we kin climb up to the trap and push it open. After that, ef we can't make one of our old rushes, we'll know the reason why."

"And what about me?" asked Charlie not a little frightened.

"We're gwinter kill you fust," hissed Jesse.

"No we hain't nuther," broke out Frank. "Jesse, don't be so blamed barbarous. The boy's only done what we'd a-done. Let him come to."

But would any of them have the chance to go?

The building, an old one, was of frame and very shaky.

How it would stand being deprived of one of its principal supports was a problem as yet unsolved.

Was the cry of murder heard by Charlie Terrill and the James Boys the same that Old King Brady had heard coming from the hermit's little hut?

Decidedly it was.

Be very sure also that the brave old detective had lost no time, once the cry rang out, in making for the hut.

It was just as he had expected.

Mose lay stretched upon the old blankets in the corner with Mr. Horsly bending over him, his hand upon the hermit's throat.

"Give them up! Give up those shares, or you're a dead man, Lucas!" he was saying just as Old King Brady burst into the room.

"Hold!" cried the detective, in that stern, deep voice which America's criminals know so well. "Hold, Mr. Horsly, or you are a dead man!"

With a smothered cry of rage the mling sharp released his hold, turning like a flash.

"Old King Brady! Great God! it can't be!" he cried. "What in the fiend's name brings you here?"

"Your misdeeds!" said the detective quietly.

"Mr. Horsly, your little game is played to a finish. I —"

"Kill him! kill him! He robbed me! he robbed me!"

There was more of the enraged animal than the man in the cry, as the hermit, gathering himself up, sprang toward his old enemy—the man who had robbed him of his all.

Horsly saw him coming and sprang aside.

"That's for you, Brady, traitor!" he shouted, discharging a revolver now suddenly whipped out.

Crack! crack! the shots rang out.

Old King Brady staggered back, the arm which he had raised to defend himself falling helpless at his side as Horsly dashed past him through the door only to run into the arms of a stalwart young man whose clothing was plastered all over with mud and slime.

"Jim! Jim! Oh, my son! Hold him!" howled the hermit.

"Father! Great God! what is all this?" breathed Jim Lucas—for it was no one else—as he flung his arms about Horsly, wrenched away his revolver, and bore him down upon the snow.

In an instant Old King Brady had sprang to his assistance.

Throwing himself upon the struggling man, whose imprecations were something fearful, he succeeded, all wounded as he was, in snapping the handcuffs about his wrists.

"You shall pay for this, Brady," groaned Horsly. "What have I done?"

"Brady—are you Old King Brady?" burst out Jim, his voice scarcely audible above that of the hermit, who was hurling the most startling epithets at Horsly's head.

"I am Old King Brady, my boy. Who are you? How came you to be here just in the nick of time?"

"Charlie Terrill!" panted Jim. "The gold! The James Boys! All in the cellar of that old building there! Save Charlie, Mr. Brady! Save —"

But Jim Lucas never completed that sentence.

The position of the little party just outside the hermit's hut was not fifty feet distant from the mouth of the slaughter house drain through which Jim had contrived to crawl with but little difficulty.

Now suddenly a sharp, cracking sound was heard, and all in an instant there came a fearful crash which seemed to shake the very ground beneath their feet.

"Charlie! Charlie! Oh, poor Charlie," groaned Jim.

For where the slaughter house had stood was only a mass of ruins. The entire rear extension of the big building had fallen and lay a complete wreck almost at their feet.

"Merciful heavens!" breathed Old King Brady, forgetting his wounded arm which was really quite a serious affair. "This is frightful! Do you mean to tell me that the James Boys were in that building? That Charlie Terrill—"

"No, no! Not Charlie!" shouted Jim, jubilantly. "Here's Charlie, now."

Out from among the ruins a figure had crawled, which now came bounding over the snow.

"Jim—Mr. Brady!" he cried. "Thank God the gold is safe! The James Boys are past mischief now."

Past mischief!

Would the James Boys ever be past mischief?

Even as Charlie spoke four shots rang out upon the night, narrowly missing Old King Brady, one actually taking Jim Lucas' hat from his head.

"There they go!" yelled Jim, pointing up to the level of Charles street at the top of the steps.

All hands saw what Jim saw then.

It was Frank and Jesse James bounding toward the great gate over the snow.

"Them's for you, Brady!" yelled Jesse. "Luck is on your side! You've got the gold, but never you mind; we shall meet again!"

And with these parting words they sprang through the gate and were gone.

"I think about \$25,000 would be the right thing, Charlie," said a handsome, well dressed fellow, addressing Leadville's most popular news-dealer one day, as together with Old King Brady they sat in the detective's office in New York.

"Nonsense!"

"No nonsense about it. You certainly did your share toward saving the gold from the James Boys and you ought to be paid. Father insists upon it—that's more."

"How is your father now, Mr. Lucas?" asked Old King Brady, whose arm was in a sling.

It made Jim Lucas blush. He was not used to being thus addressed.

He was quite well and entirely sane when I left Boston, sir. The recovery of his property so many times increased in value has made a new man of him. You see he owns two-thirds of the Golden Nugget and his lawyers say that no one can get it away from him. He starts for Leadville next week. He's only waiting to appear in court against that man Horsly, although the lawyer don't think he can be held for any more serious charge than attempted manslaughter after all."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the detective. "I'm going to Boston to see about that myself."

"It's so. Come, Charlie, I'm going to Leadville too, and shall travel in the Pullman this time. You shall go with us, but you must take this money first."

"Not unless Mr. Brady takes half," replied Charlie, stoutly.

It was finally compromised by the detective taking a third, which scarcely compensated him for a badly wounded arm.

And that was the way the affair of the James Boys in Boston came to an end.

Came to an end because the James Boys were no longer in Boston.

Though Old King Brady lost no time in following after Jesse's parting shot he did not catch them.

In fact he never even caught sight of them again during the short time he remained in Boston, for that morning the brothers took the early train west, feeling that they had had quite enough of the city of brown bread and baked beans.

Upon examining the ruins of the slaughter-house, whose fall was unquestionably caused by the cutting out of the support, the gold was found intact just where Mulvany and his friend Rooney had put it.

Mulvany himself had crawled away just before the disaster, and managed to make his escape, only to be dismissed from the police force as soon as Charlie's story was told. He escaped trial and subsequent imprisonment by jumping his bail. Rooney was discovered drunk still, and asleep, in the harness-room, which chanced to be in a part of the building which did not fall.

Fortunately for Charlie, he anticipated the trouble, and not caring, moreover, to trust himself to the tender mercies of the James Boys, had watched his chance, and followed Jim through the drain.

He was outside the building when it fell. Just what happened after the removal of the post was never known, though it was quite evident that the brothers had time to climb through the trap before the final catastrophe came.

Soon the tidings of their train robberies and other depredations in Missonri were filling the papers as of yore, and as Clel Miller was seen among the band on more than one occasion, it is evident that he managed to get safe home and make his peace with the outlaw chief.

And so it all ended, and most happily for the Lucases, father and son.

"Old Mose, the hermit," was soon forgotten. Out in Denver, if you happen to drop in at the Windsor some day, like enough you will have an odd-looking old man pointed out to you as old Moses Lucas, of the Golden Nugget, a man many times a millionaire.

The old man runs the mine now, and Jim and Charlie Terrill are in charge.

The property is paying better than ever. The Boston lawyer employed by Jim, at Old King Brady's suggestion, got the outside stockholders together and a strong company was formed who, under the direction of a competent mining expert, are working the property for all it's worth.

Thus strangely do events turn out.

Little did Old King Brady dream when summoned by Mr. Horsly on that apparently unimportant business that he would be the instrument in righting a great wrong.

He had as little idea of this as that he would meet the James Boys in Boston, or as Mr. Horsly had that he would get a year's sentence in Concord State Prison, or as Jim Lucas had that he was taking the first step on the road to wealth when Charlie Terrill lifted him on that stormy night into THE CAR OF GOLD.

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